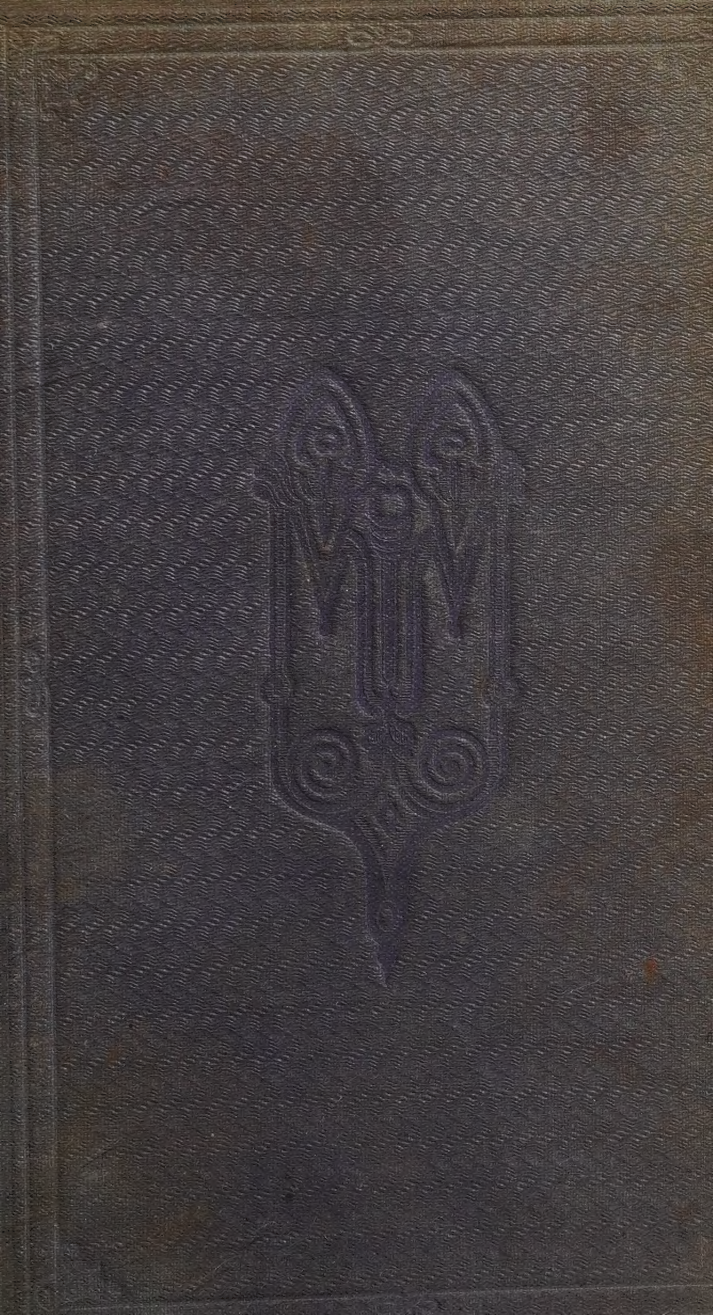

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THE

SHADY SIDE;

OR,

LIFE IN A COUNTRY PARSONAGE

by Mrs. Martha (Stone) Hubbell

BY A PASTOR'S WIFE.

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"The shadow creeps and creeps, and is always looking over the shoulder of the sunshine."

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

TWENTIETH THOUSAND.

BOSTON:
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TO

MY HUSBAND,

FELLOW-PILGRIM IN A PATH SIMILAR TO THAT

HEREIN FAINTLY SKETCHED, — DARKSOME, YET ILLUMINED,

AND BRIGHTENING MORE ONLY AS HEAVEN'S NEARER LIGHT FALLS

UPON IT, — WHO, NOT SHUNNING FOR HIMSELF ITS ROUGHNESSES, HAS EVER

SMOOTHED THE WAY FOR THESE TENDERER FEET, NOBLY

BEARING MORE THAN HIS HALF ITS BURDENS,

This Simple Narrative,

STRONGLY SUGGESTIVE OF OUR MUTUAL TRIALS, AND FEWER YET

FAR MORE EXCEEDING JOYS,

IS AFFECTIONATELY AND GRATEFULLY

Inscribed.

PREFACE.

Let not the gentle reader turn away from the *sombre title* of this book, fearful of too dark a picture. It has its lights as well as shades; yet, as one sketch of the same landscape has taken its title from the interspersed brightness, the author of this has chosen its appellation from the opposite feature of the scene; confident, too, that, however softened, gilded, or inly illumined, the original presents to an observer's eye more *shadow* than sunshine.

Neither let any say, "The thing is not new; we have had this before." So far as the book may seem to traverse ground recently occupied by kindred publications, justice to herself prompts the writer to say that the idea originated in her own mind, two or three years ago, and was shaping itself thus, before the appearance of Sunny Side, — that popular little book, now doubly dear as one of the last legacies, from a gifted pen, to the Christian community. That work led, indeed, to some modification of these pages, lest the writer should seem to follow in the footsteps of another.

Nor, again, need any affirm this to be a book of *fiction*. While it is not averred that every incident occurred in the connection here presented, thus much may be ventured; — that if any scenes seem to the reader to be drawn from fancy, and not quite true to nature, *they* are, doubtless, the literal, unvarnished incidents of veritable history. Indeed, so faithful is the picture to truth, that it is quite possible the originals may start up, here and there, aggrieved at what they deem an unauthorized exposure of their features to the world at large. To any such, the writer would say, in all sincerity, that, so far as her own history supplied materials for illustration, while she has much "extenuated," she has "set down naught in malice;" — sure, meanwhile, of her *motive*, so to set forth fact, as to awaken attention to existing evils, and stimulate those who have the power, to apply the remedy.

With this end, these simple annals of Parsonage life, — written hastily, under the pressure of multiform cares, — are committed to the Great Shepherd of the fold, and to a candid Christian public.

THE SHADY SIDE.

CHAPTER I.

"Every beginning is shrouded in a mist,
And the traveller setteth on his journey oppressed with many thoughts.
Balancing his hopes and fears, and looking for some order in the chaos:
So, he commenceth at a clue, unravelling its tangled skein,
And boldly speedeth on to thread the labyrinth before him."

It was a beautiful day in the early autumn of 183–. The last rays of the setting sun shot aslant between a row of old poplars, and illumined the windows of a substantial farm-house in the valley of the Housatonic. It was such a house as one might find almost anywhere in the agricultural districts of New England, — two stories in front, with a back roof, long and sloping, and a "lean-to" in the rear, just high enough from the ground to receive under its eaves a hogshead as a reservoir for the falling rain. On the old moss-covered well-sweep, high in air, swung the oaken bucket, from which the tea-kettle had just been filled in view of the evening meal.

From a capacious barn near by issued two rosy-cheeked, bare-headed boys, fresh from a contested search of the hens' nests; one bringing the spoils in his cloth cap, and the other in his well-worn palmleaf, at the imminent risk of their exit through the crown. A third hardy little urchin was sitting astride a door-sill in the old weather-beaten granary, plying his jack-knife on a cross-bow, and looking up at every bird that,

flitting by, rested its wing among the poplars. Presently his quick eye caught sight of a black pony, pacing noiselessly up the untravelled road, bearing on his back a gentleman who was no stranger there. But, instead of running down the deep yard to open the gate, our young rogue scampered round the corner of the house, clapping his hands, and shouting to his brothers, "Boys, boys, Uncle Ned has come!"

While the boys are making all speed toward the kitchen, to dispossess themselves of their precious freight, and inform mother of the arrival, there is a stirring of the white curtains of one of the "north room" windows. A neat muslin cap-border brings nearer the glass a much-wrinkled yet placid face, which soon turns away again to an aged companion, with the words, "See here, father; is n't this our Edward?" By this time, three active boys hold the black pony by the bridle, inside the gate; and, just as the old man opens the door, an agile foot is on the stone step, and a voice, which is ever music to those aged hearts, prefaces a kiss and an embrace with joyous greetings. A door from the kitchen suddenly opens, and sister Laura accosts the newly-arrived with homely welcomings, and the inquiry, what brings him hither so unexpectedly; a tremulous voice chiming in, "Edward is always welcome, though he takes us by surprise." All this passes in a minute, and our traveller recrosses the threshold, saying he must not sit till he has cared for his horse. "Brother James, I suppose, is yet in the field." "Yes, but he will be home soon, and will be glad to see you, too;" and the busy housewife vanishes, intent on her table cheer. The aged father totters into the yard, after his son. Once more that placid face is pressed against the window-pane, and the last ray of sunlight falls across the silvery hair, emblem of a brighter light, inly shining at the close of life's eventful day.

While the boys are — as they suppose — *helping* their uncle take care of the tired horse, and grandpa is looking on, we may as well take the opportunity to state that the personage whose

arrival makes such a sensation, is the *Rev.* Edward Vernon, who, eighteen months since, was ordained to the work of the ministry, and installed over the Congregational Church and Society in the quiet village of Salem, some thirty miles eastward, in the valley of the Connecticut. He is the youngest child of the aged couple whom we find at the old homestead, — not as the active head of the household, but as revered members of the family of their elder son, — the two families having merged in one upon the death of Edward's only sister, a few years before. To obtain enough ready money from the small farm to send a boy through college, required the utmost effort of both father and son; but they toiled together, and nobly accomplished the task. And now that Edward had graduated with honor, and was settled in his profession, it was arranged, by mutual consent, that James should take the farm, abide at the old place, smooth the declining days of the aged pair, support them to the close, and consider himself lawful owner of whatever might be left. Edward's *education* was to be *his* patrimony; and it was more precious in his eyes than all the goodly fields and meadows that lay around his birthplace. Not that he was indifferent to these; he never caught a glimpse of the old familiar place without a thrill, such as no other spot on earth could awaken in his bosom. This very evening, as he rode up the green avenue to the farm-house, he had indulged many a tender recollection; and, as he led his horse around to the stable, he would have relapsed again into reverie, — for he was a man given to reveries, — had it not been for the noisy little group that attended him.

"Is this your horse, uncle?"

"See his sharp ears, Harry. What do you call him, uncle? Our horse is as big as three of him."

"Grandpa, come and see Uncle Edward's colt. He says it's only a colt. How black he is!"

"So you have really bought you a horse, Edward; and a pretty young one, too."

"Yes, sir, he is *rather* younger than I liked, — only two, last spring, — but he pleased me, and I shall be careful of him. He has brought me along nobly to-day, though I have walked up the hills."

"Well, I think he 'll do, my son, as you 've nobody to carry but yourself."

The young man smiled; his color heightened a little, and he was evidently hesitating what to reply, when a voice from the meadow shouted, "Holloa, there!" and presently a cart, laden with yellow pumpkins, slowly creaked through the barn-yard. Its driver dropped his cart-whip, and, wiping his hands on a corner of his brown frock, grasped the soft palm extended to meet his, and reluctantly took on his unshorn cheek the proffered kiss. Master George was not far behind; but his salutations were hurried through, as little Eddie pulled him to the stable, which seemed the centre of attraction, now that the colt was duly installed there.

"*Black*, is he?" said George. "I believe it; he 's as black as Pompey."

"O, Uncle Edward!" said his little namesake; "I wish you would call this horse, — I mean this *colt*, — Pompey."

"And who is Pompey, pray?"

"O! he 's just the blackest man you ever saw, — right from Guinea. *May* we call him so?"

Their uncle smiled approvingly on his favorite; and so the name of the young minister's horse was established, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which changes not.

A call from the house to make ready for supper dispersed the group; and Edward walked with his father slowly in, and took the arm-chair by his mother's side. The quick perception of the mother detected an unwonted joy in those deep blue eyes, now bent so lovingly on her, as he rested his elbow on her chair, and his cheek upon his hand. She fondly put back the brown ringlets from his temple, as she had done many a time in his boyhood, and said, half-inquiringly, "I have not seen you look so

happy, Edward, this long, long time." He returned her gaze with a steady, significant look, and then replied, in a soft, low tone, "Yes, mother dear, I perceive you are reading my secret. I have, indeed, a new source of happiness, and I have come thus unexpectedly to tell you of it. I know you will rejoice with me in my newly-found treasure, even as we wept together over our common loss, when dear Abby died." A tear of mingled joy and sadness stole down that furrowed cheek, and she warmly pressed the hand which now, in obedience to a hurried call, led her out to tea.

CHAPTER II.

"A fair dwelling, furnished wisely, with a gentle tenant in it,—
This is the glory of humanity."

"My heart sings like a bird,
At sound of that sweet word,
The sweetest ever heard,
Mary, Mary."

We next find the family group, with the addition of a fifth boy taken up from the cradle, assembled in the old north room, the old people's room, for evening prayers. A stick or two of dry maple is burning brightly in the ample fire-place, for the aged are keenly sensitive to the first cool evenings of autumn. Two candles are lighted on the mantel, and another on the little stand which holds the family Bible. At his father's request, Edward leads the devotions of the hour. Having read a Psalm, they all kneel at the family altar, while the sacrifices of contrition and praise are laid thereon, and incense and a pure offering ascend to heaven. Who shall blame those aged Christians, if their spirit rise to-night, on swifter wing, toward the throne, as the beloved son, whom they have consecrated to a holy calling, out of the depths of a rich spiritual mind, and a heart full of all tender affections, makes known

their requests and thanksgivings unto God? Thus, in mercy, does nature sometimes minister unto grace.

The children now bid good-night, and their mother goes out to see them safely pillowed. It is the time for which Edward has waited to divulge his errand and converse upon his plans. And so, with his usual good sense, he opens the matter without hesitation and without reserve. He has resolved to marry; and Providence has, in his view, smiled most graciously upon him. The elect lady is Mary Allison, daughter of a physician in the old, aristocratic town of Mayfield, and sister of Wm. Allison, recently appointed to the Armenian mission. There are two other children in the family by a previous marriage, one of whom is a merchant in New York, and the other housekeeper for her father, and mistress of the family, since the death of Mary's mother, ten years ago.

Brother James inquires after the pecuniary interests of the family, and is told that the doctor owns a beautiful situation, but is dependent upon his profession, from year to year, which affords him hitherto a handsome living.

Sister Laura has rejoined the circle, and is impatient to learn some particulars of the young lady herself. Not being bashful, she plies her questions in a direct and sententious manner. His replies are of the same quality:

"Is she handsome?"

"I have never heard her called so; no"

"Light complexion?"

"Not *too* white."

"What eyes and hair?"

"Soft, hazel eyes, and rich, dark chestnut hair, in curls."

"Curls! Ah! — did you say she was very pale?"

"No, indeed; she 's as blooming as health and a happy spirit can make her."

"Gay, is she? — *lively*, I mean."

"She is cheerful and buoyant, and thinks it no sin to laugh" —

"Is she tall?"

"I really cannot tell. I think she must be of that elegant height, where you would add nothing, and take nothing away."

"I suppose it just suits you, then; but, Edward, you are such an admirer of beauty, it 's a pity she is not beautiful."

(With a smile,) "Who says she is not *beautiful?* You inquired if she were *handsome.* I think she is not called *so.*'

"O! that 's it? Well, I don't see any difference."

"Any more questions, sister Laura?"

"I think I have got a pretty good idea of her now; but"— Brother James now interposed.

"It 's too bad, Laura. Edward, I know, will think you rude."

"Why, has n't he come over on purpose to tell us about this affair? I know he expects to be questioned."

"Go on," said Edward; "you may not always find me in so communicative a mood."

But sister Laura had some misgivings about her last question, and she looked very inquiringly at him a full minute, first. At length it came, abruptly:

"How old is this Miss Mary Allison?"

For the first time, the young man showed some embarrassment; and, bracing himself as if to meet remonstrance, replied that she was eighteen.

"What! Edward," said old Mr. Vernon, "such a little girl as that?'

"O,' said Laura, "he 's only fooling us."

"No, he 's not," interrupted the kind mother; "but we need not fear that Edward would agree to marry one who is unsuitable for him. Wisdom and goodness do not depend on age."

"No; but *experience* does wife; and you know experience is everything."

No one replied, and conversation flagged. Sister Laura's fertile brain soon started a new track, and she asked,

"When does the wedding come off, Edward?"

"Really," said he, "I am unable to tell you. I expect to ask that question myself, before I return to Salem."

"Do your people know of your engagement?" continued the questioner.

"Some of them may have their suspicions awakened by my occasional absences; but none, except my landlady and her husband, are enlightened on the subject. To them I have confided my secret, and it is safe." Then turning to his father who had not spoken in some time, he gayly said,

"What do you think, sir, of my purchasing a house?"

The good old man was in his second childhood, and somewhat querulous. He curtly answered, "When you do so foolish a thing, I shall think you are not in your right mind."

An animated discussion followed, in which all agreed that as a general thing, it was unwise for a young minister to invest money in a dwelling-house; and especially unsafe to make such a purchase without means of present payment. Edward, however, was sure his case was an exception. He had talked confidentially with Mr. Cook, in whose family he boarded, who was one of his best men, and well acquainted with the state of feeling in the parish. It was his opinion that the society would not unite in building a parsonage. There was only one vacant tenement in the village, — a good house near the church, whose late occupant died insolvent. Mr. C. thought it a favorable opportunity to secure a dwelling for the minister; indeed, it seemed the *only* thing to be done. He had managed the business in his own name, and obtained the refusal of the place at the low price of twelve hundred dollars. It was a place which would be always salable. If the present minister should leave Salem, the house might be advantageously rented to his successor, or the society might, by that time, be willing to buy it for

a parsonage. At any rate, it was offered now at so low a sum that there could be little risk in taking it.

So plausible did this statement seem, that it induced the acquiescence of James in his brother's plan, though not without some misgiving, while their father assented to whatever "the boys" should think best. Yet he could not forbear adding, significantly, "You remember, Mr. Ely, Edward, and the fine house for which he paid fifteen hundred dollars, mostly borrowed money, and which he was obliged to sell for a thousand, at the end of twelve months."

"O, his case was peculiar; he lost his hold on his people, before he made that unwise purchase, and ought to have known that he could not reckon on staying a year."

"Well, well," said the old gentleman, soothingly, "I did n't speak of that to tease you. But come, now, tell us how you expect to raise the twelve hundred for your house."

To this the young man replied by asking advice. If he buy the place, it must be a cash purchase as there are creditors clamorous for the money. Out of his salary of six hundred dollars, he has laid by, the first year, three hundred and fifty. The savings of the current year, thus far, will increase the sum to five hundred, and leave enough to pay for his horse, — possibly to buy a carriage. But the other seven he must borrow on the strength of his future income.

"I will arrange it for you, brother," said the practical young farmer. "Captain N. will lend the money, to be paid in annual instalments of a hundred dollars, and you can save that easily. I will give my name as surety."

"But," said Edward, "will he not want other security?"

"No," said sister Laura, laughingly, "not while 'Barnhill Lot' is ours. It 's the only piece of land between his farm and the street, and he is always teasing father and James to sell it to him. He 'll only hope that, if he lends you the money, you 'll not be able to pay, and he shall somehow or other get possession of that field."

Edward deprecated the suspicion that his brother's estate should ever become involved through his means, which elicited some very fraternal sentiments in reply; and so the family separated for the night's repose.

CHAPTER III.

"There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will."

"Smitten friends
Are angels sent on errands full of love."

Another day and night quickly passed, and when the sun arose the following morning, it met our traveller some ten miles on his homeward way, — not retracing his steps, but bending quite circuitously northward toward Mayfield.

The day promises to be a warm one for the season, and he must take the ride leisurely over a hilly country. While he is moving slowly down the hills, and walking up many a long ascent, and pacing over an occasional level, halting at mid-day to refresh both "man and beast," let us take the opportunity to run back a distance, and gather up a few more items in the past history of this youthful ambassador of Christ.

In his boyhood we find him intelligent, ardent and impulsive, with a high sense of honor, and a quick indignation at injustice, — with passions easily aroused, and contrition as quickly awakened, — the angry word and clenched fist followed soon by the repentant tear. Love of books and of sports are so nicely balanced, that it is not easy to predict whether he will come out a scholarly or a pleasure-seeking youth.

As he enters upon his teens he is fitful and restless, often expressing a distaste for solid study, wishing Greek and Latin to the winds, threatening to burn his Virgil and lose his

Reader, and making the most of every holiday for amusement. Anon, something occasions a revulsion of feeling, and he labors at his school-tasks like a hero, abridging his diversions in his close application to books. It is evident that he is unusually susceptible to impressions from without, and that he has not yet received a decisive bias in the shaping of his future. The influences of the family upon him, hitherto, have been gentle, rather than stimulating. His brother being eight years his senior, and his sister five, he has been their plaything and pet, — a child to be watched over, and exempted from hardship; not impelled up the rough steep of science, but encouraged by sympathetic words and kind smiles. His parents, too, thought he was studious enough for a boy somewhat slight and delicate. Though his father resolved to give him a collegiate education, and deep in his mother's heart lay the cherished purpose to train him for the pulpit, they thought there was time enough yet for him to wake up in earnest to the pursuit of knowledge.

But, with his fifteenth year, a new era dawned in the history of the boy. A change of teachers occurred in the old Academy. The venerable preceptor retired, and was succeeded by a young student fresh from his graduating honors at Yale. He was a fine scholar, a man of energy and talent, and destined for the bar.

Accustomed to study character, he could not fail to be interested in a boy like Edward Vernon. He soon understood him thoroughly, having won his confidence and admiration. He saw in him latent capabilities, which needed only a motive-power to make him a shining man. He felt, with the satisfaction which always attends such conscious supremacy, that the springs of action in this undeveloped mind were, in a sense, under his own hand, — that, at his touch, some one of them would rise to be the mainspring of the soul. He chose — alas! — *Ambition*, his own master-passion; and he did his work well.

A great change came over Edward. He had been a fai

scholar while without aim or end. Now that the fire of ambition was kindled in his soul, and his diligence was the fruit of a conscious purpose to excel, there were no bounds to his progress. To go through college honorably, and study law, was the model course ever in his eye.

He met with little counteraction in the race on which he now entered. His brother looked upon the matter as a sudden ebullition of boyish zeal, which the next vacation would doubtless cool. His mother understood him better. She was pleased to see him more studious, yet she feared for his health; and, most of all, she instinctively trembled for his spiritual interests, and sighed as she saw a new barrier rising between her long-cherished desire and its fulfilment. His sister Abby entered with all her soul into his new plans and feelings. He was her darling, — her pride; and her heart beat warmly to his, in all his aspirations for the future. With her he measured his progress, and before her fond eyes wove his bright webs of coming triumph. And when conscience whispered of selfish ambition, or his mother's mild admonition crossed his path, he laid this unction to his soul, that to please his dear and only sister was one great motive in climbing to the temple of fame.

Two years of preparatory study passed rapidly away, and Edward, in his eighteenth year, entered college, and took a high stand in his class. This position he maintained through out his course, and graduated one of the first three. He was a quick mathematician, a fine linguist, and a good writer. Keeping his chosen profession in view, he had improved his opportunities for declamation with great success. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when he entered the law-school, many predicted for him a brilliant career. He himself saw before him an open path to a long-desired goal.

"A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." Even now, influences were at work which should revolutionize our young friend's course in life.

A cloud had settled over the home of his childhood. His

cherished sister was drooping under a slow decline. With the progress of disease came new views of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. Her strong sympathy with her brother's ambitious projects was displaced by the one deep desire to see him devoted, heart and hand, to the service of Christ. It was not enough, now, that he was virtuous, moral, and a respecter of religious things. Her wishes and prayers for him, and pleadings with him, could not stop short of the renewing grace of God.

But the rebellious heart did not soon or easily yield. Edward remembered his mother's prayers through all his childhood; and, though she had never told him so in words, he felt that she had in her closet dedicated him to the ministry. Hence he had not been wholly at ease since the choice of his profession. An unacknowledged misgiving had lain at his heart. When his impressible nature became thoroughly aroused, under the appeals of his dying sister, and the Holy Spirit kindled within him convictions of ill-desert, and desires for reconciliation with God, the inward struggle was greatly prolonged. He had a latent feeling that, if he should become a Christian, duty *might* require him to serve God in the ministry. To abandon his chosen career, just opening so brightly before him, promising the realization of his youthful visions and golden dreams, — this, he felt, would be hard indeed. During the last half of his first year of professional study he was thus tossed to and fro on the unquiet sea of conflicting thoughts. The vacation that followed was an eventful crisis. In the quiet of a sick-room, with a loved object fading before his eyes, he read daily lessons which cooled the fever of his ambition, and gave him juster views of life. In that calm atmosphere, where patient endurance and holy trust and heavenly hope were mingled, the youthful aspirant for fame laid himself, a free-will offering at the foot of the Cross. He made no compromises, no reserve; — to be in God's hand, and subject to his appointments, was enough.

The time drew near for Edward's departure to resume his studies. The last morning arrived, and as yet nothing had been said of his future plans. It was a season of quickened thought and emotion. The family worship was just concluded in the invalid's room. The carriage was at the door, waiting the young student's leave-taking. Ere another reünion of the family group, a stern messenger was liable to enter, and set an icy seal on those lips that were now framing tender adieus for him who had been her pride and her pet, — who was now her beloved brother in Christ. She still retained his hand, as he turned from her bed. There was something unsaid, which she would find courage to speak.

"Dear Edward, do you go back to study law, or *will you be a preacher of the Gospel?*"

His eye turned involuntarily to meet his mother's, who was standing near. Its meek pleading told him how much *her* heart also was in Abby's question.

"I will *think* of it, — I will write," was all he could reply, as he hurried from the house, with their parting benedictions.

Notwithstanding much thinking by the way, he reached the distant city, at evening, in a state of painful incertitude. Not that he was unwilling to give up his old preferences at the call of duty; but it was not easy for him, in this instance, to determine what was duty. Were not good men — men of high Christian principle — needed at the bar, as well as in the pulpit? Might not his turn of mind and habits of thought be more consonant to the legal profession than the clerical? But the question hinged on another point, — was he *called of God* to the vocation of an ambassador of Christ? Without such an inward call to the holy work he would not dare assume its responsibilities. He shut himself up in his room, and there decided the matter, on his knees before God, solemnly dedicating himself to the great work of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. The satisfaction, the peace of soul, the new impulse in holy living, which followed this decision, greatly

strengthened his belief that it was according to the will of God.

Two months of his first theological term had passed, when Edward was called home to see his sister die.

So slowly did life ebb away, in the bosom of the dying girl that many days of precious converse were allowed, making that sick-room as the gate of heaven to the stricken household. And when the pure spirit took its flight, it seemed to Edward that he too moved upward with its blessed convoy, till he caught glimpses of "the glory unutterable" beyond the veil. Henceforth the memory of his sainted sister was interwoven with his great work in life, and beside her sleeping clay he bound himself anew to the service of his Master.

His sister's mantle of gentleness and grace appeared to have fallen upon him; — so his mother thought, as he caressingly soothed her grief, and whispered words that were balm to her aching heart. A new element of character was here developed, which, in after years, gave his presence an unwonted charm in the eyes of many a child of sorrow.

Our young theologian's course through the seminary was far from being smooth. He suffered much from ill health, the result of his former close application, and of prolonged nervous excitement, while balancing the great question of probation, and passing through subsequent scenes of trial and bereavement.

With his physical prostration resolution flagged, intellect wearied, and the whole machinery of his being seemed to come to a stand. He could not study; — he complained that he could not *think;* yet thought was torturing him with many a suggestion of the adversary. Foremost among these was the withering query, "May I not be, after all, mistaken in looking toward the ministry?"

His intervals of relaxation did, indeed, restore him to a comfortable state of body and mind; so that his study terms were *commenced* with hopefulness and vigor. But the slough was always waiting for him when he halted; and, even in his best

moods, he had the reproachful consciousness that he was not making the most of himself, and should fall far behind the expectations of his friends. There was cause for this conjecture, as might be gathered from such conversation as the following, among a knot of convivial students:

"I say, Dexter, what has become of Vernon?"

"Thrown himself away; foolish fellow!"

"What do you mean? Where is he?"

"Sunk his law-books, and gone over to the divinity-school."

"He was a fine fellow, — would have made a splendid lawyer."

"*Just so;* and now he'll only make a splendiferous — cipher."

"Not so fast, Dexter," said another; "I'll be bound Ned Vernon will make himself *count* anywhere."

"Humph! you should see him, as I saw him to-day, coming from lecture. You'd think he had been taking a nap in Sleepy Hollow."

"What's the matter? What's come over him?"

"O, he had better stuck to his profession! He's lost his ambition; lost a sister, too, they say; and he took that hardly. 'T was she persuaded him to give up the law. Studying the ology! — bah! 't will be a dead loss."

"Too great a sacrifice, certainly. Vernon was a splendid scholar. He was in my division, you know."

Such wise discussions as this a theological brother, who overheard, was weak enough to report to the subject of it; to whom they were as coals to burning coals, and wood to fire.

The last year of professional study was passing rapidly away, and with more profit to young Vernon than any which preceded it. His health had improved, and his seasons of depression were less frequent. Now was the time to bury his doubts and fears so thoroughly that their ghosts shall not haunt his path as he goes to his field of toil. He resolved to investigate, and examine, and settle anew, the great question of duty.

Light from above streamed in upon his mind. Grace from the fountain flowed upon his heart. Desire kindled to a burning glow in his soul. He was not only satisfied with his choice, but he could say with the apostle, — "Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." His humility deepened, — faith took a strong hold of the promises, — hope painted her bow across the future, not with the fading hues of earth, but with pencil dipped in the enduring tints above. Cheerful he girt on the harness for a life of toil, and longed to begin his work.

Nor did he need to wait much for employment. As soon as licensed, he was engaged to supply, a few Sabbaths, the vacant pulpit in Salem. When a unanimous call was extended him, he accepted with little hesitation, being strongly advised thereto by his theological teacher and kind friend, Dr. ——.

Esquire Lewis met the reverend doctor at the close of the ordination service, and thanked him for sending them so promising a "candidate." — "Very interesting young man, doctor; we calculate he'll be *distinguished* yet;" which elicited the reply, "He *is* and *always will be* an *interesting* man. As for the other, give him fair play, Esquire Lewis, and he will make a *growing* man; over-work him the first year or two, and he will be apt to get into a slough."

"Ay, ay, — we'll take care of that; it's for our interest, you know;" and the esquire rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction; and the council departed, and the people dispersed and the young pastor was left alone with his field of toil.

The new minister was willing to work, — his whole heart was in his work, — and the Lord gave him enough to do. Religion soon became a topic of absorbing interest throughout the community; month followed month, laden with testimonials of God's faithfulness in hearing prayer, and blessing the word. Many sinners were renewed — many a halting saint sent on his way rejoicing.

That first fourteen months of his ministry was a memorable

period in the history of Edward Vernon. Can he ever doubt, again, that God hath called him, putting him into the ministry, and that a dispensation of the gospel is committed to him?

But, precious as was this attestation of his mission, his physical frame felt the "wear and tear" of exhausting service. A reaction was coming over him; it was plain that he needed rest. It was happy for him that there was a wise gray head in Salem, whose word was seldom disputed. On the evening of a hot Sabbath in June, when the young preacher had dragged wearily through two sermons and a Bible-class exercise, good Deacon Ely (dear man! — was there ever another such?) saddled his old mare, and rode over to Mr. Cook's. "Mr. Vernon," said he, "you may as well get ready to-morrow, and be off somewhere, on a play-spell, for three or four weeks. Esquire Lewis and I will take care of the pulpit."

That *first vacation*, — with its luxuriant sense of freedom from care, of time for rest, of leisure for social converse and miscellaneous reading, — it was another notable era in his life; a green spot, to which, from many a far-on desert place, he looked back with joy and gratitude; memorable, not the least, for his first acquaintance with her who was to be the companion of his pilgrimage.

CHAPTER IV.

> "Ask her if, when storms are long,
> She can sing a cheerful song —
> When the rude winds rock the tree,
> If she 'll closer cling to thee."

While we have been taking this too leisurely excursion up the stream of time, *it* has kept noiselessly on its downward flow to the setting of another sun. Our horseman, too, has travelled patiently on, and the tall spires of Mayfield now shine before him in the distance, like burnished gold, as they catch the last

rays of sunlight from the unclouded west. At this sight the young man's thoughts suddenly concentrated on one point, often revolved during his solitary ride: "How will my request for an early day be received? Will the doctor hearken to my reasons, and appreciate my condition? How will the staid, housewifely sister regard so sudden a movement? As to Mary herself" — Here he recollected that he was taking her by surprise, — making his first unannounced visit, — and a smile, half-mischievous, half-expectant, displaced the shade of anxious thought; he drew his bridle-rein more firmly, and said to pony, "We are almost there."

The twilight suddenly deepens as he enters the broad street, lined with tall old trees, whose overhanging branches almost exclude the midday sun. Were he in some of his wonted moods, he could not forbear to stop and enjoy the delicious awe of early twilight in this grand alcove, with the plaintive music of the first autumnal breezes, and the lone note of the whip-poorwill. But he is too intent on the object of his journey; so he pushes on a quarter of a mile toward the upper end of the street. The house he seeks is not yet lighted; he does not stop, as usual, at the front post, but rides softly under the old elm to the side-gate, and, quietly dismounting, proceeds cautiously along the carriage-track toward the stables.

It is evidently his purpose to gain the rear unobserved. But his eye, which has scanned every window as he passed, is suddenly arrested, and with it his step. How can he but pause and look at a well-known figure, sitting in the recess of the library window, with her face so near the glass that the dark curls rest upon the sash? Were she not completely absorbed in an open letter, he would not stand so near her unnoticed. Shall he touch the window with his riding-whip? Ah! that is not needed now; she has become aware that some one is gazing at her from without, and in another moment she sees that it is Edward Vernon. He notes each change on that expressive face, — perplexity, surprise, delight. She does not utter excla-

mations, — neither of them speaks, — but she rises suddenly, and he notes many letters in her hands, some open, others in a package. He is at no loss to divine their author; his look, she fancies, proclaims as much. He touches his hat gallantly, throws her a respectful kiss from the tip of his glove, and leads his horse slowly by; while she tosses back her curls, shakes her finger threateningly at him, and reseats herself in the window.

Soon a stir is heard in the house. "Mr. Vernon has come!" and Dick is off to perform his duty as ostler.

"Ann, where's Mary?"

"She's in the lib'ry, Miss Allison. I've told her, but she doesn't act as if she believed it."

Mr. Vernon is soon seated in the back-parlor, and the usual salutations passed. Miss Allison rises, and says she will speak to Mary. She finds her still in the window-seat.

"Do you really know that Edward is here?"

"I think I shall understand it by-and-by."

"If you were not looking so happy, one would think this an unpleasant surprise. Come right out with me; I know he is impatient to see you."

The roguish girl says, he can wait a minute, — she'll be out soon, — and mentally exclaims, "How do I know but he has been gazing at me the last half hour?"

Sister Harriet goes back, saying, "I think, sir, she hardly realizes that you are here.' His peculiar smile puzzles her; she inwardly concludes that *lovers are* queer.

"Let me seek her in the library," replied he; and, stepping into the hall, he was soon at the further end of the passage, and confronted Mary at the open door, just as she closed her writing-case on the package of letters she had been folding.

"Why did you not write me you were coming, that I might be ready to greet you?" — (her speaking face said, "that I might have the pleasure of *expecting you?*")

"And why might I not, for once, have the pleasure of sur-

prising you? Besides, had I not arrived unexpectedly, I should not have known how you employ yourself at twilight. You must have some interesting correspondence, to absorb you so much in a re-perusal."

"O, yes!" said the young girl archly; "I have *some* letters that will bear a second reading, — brother William's, for example."

This tête-à-tête was interrupted by a call to tea. Afterward came a quiet evening, — all too short for the much that was to be said and settled.

Mary was not prepared for the request, that asked the consummation of her plighted faith with little delay. She could think of many reasons why it was not best or wise. It would give her little time to anticipate it, and her friends brief notice for needful preparation. Her brother William was to spend as much of the winter at home as possible, and it was his last, previous to his departure from the country to his field of missionary toil. She could not, moreover, be unmindful of her youth and inexperience. She was only six months out of school, and not yet initiated into the mysteries of good housewifery. To qualify her in this respect, she relied on the coming winter, under the tuition of her expert, matronly sister.

Besides, if visions of a wedding ever floated through her brain, they were of a bridal-hour in *May*, 'mid the genial airs, and fresh verdure, and opening rose-buds, that for eighteen years had crowned her birth-day.

The period, too, of her acquaintance with Mr. Vernon was so short, — only four brief months, — that, except just after a letter or a visit, he seemed too much like a new acquaintance to justify the near approach of the hour that should make them one. Then it was so pleasant to be a child at home, and watch for his coming; to meet him after separation; to correspond with him when absent; to be absorbed in studying a character which unfolded to her growing admiration and sympathy. How could she have this delightful order of things interrupted?

As all these and kindred misgivings passed through the young girl's mind, some of them were distinctly urged before her petitioner; and others left for him to catch by that quick intuition which enabled him to interpret her feelings by the slightest clue.

The skilful pleader of his own cause, he had reserved his arguments to follow her objections; and he addressed himself to the work with a smile of assurance that showed him somewhat confident of success.

"As for the good doctor and his house-keeper, he would take upon himself the responsibility of securing their acquiescence in his wishes. True, it would be pleasant to spend a winter at home, with her cherished brother; but his time will be broken up by his preparations to leave the country. They can ask him to divide his stay between Mayfield and Salem; and, as the latter place is nearer his business, she will probably see about as much of him as if remaining at home. William is not to leave till the last of April, and it might be feared that a wedding in May would witness a tearful bride.

"What though she is young?—he is willing to risk her inexperience. Knowledge of household duty depends not so much on years as on native judgment and tact."

With delicate ingenuity he draws from her the acknowledgment that only when he is away does he seem to her like a comparative stranger. In his presence she feels as if she had known him long.

He playfully assures her that he hopes they are neither of them like a book, with a "finis" to be reached after turning a few leaves, more or less, but a life-long study; and, while she is marvelling how she has revealed to him so much of her secret thoughts, he adds, that "even in their married home, she will have opportunities to expect his coming, and that reünion after absence will be no infrequent joy."

And now for his strong reasons, which are, mainly, two. "A settled minister cannot be engaged in a long courtship,

without disadvantage to his people. The matter is taken up on the lips of talkers — gives rise to unprofitable speculations — takes him too frequently from home, to the complaint of some who miss him at a sick-bed, or a funeral, and of others, who notice the deficiency in his pulpit preparations."

Here Mary interposed. "She was sure *his* people could not complain of his frequent absence on such an errand; he had visited her only four times in the three months since his vacation." "But," he told her, "she was taking no account of the times he came *invisibly;* that, when absent in *spirit* from his study and his parish, bodily presence profited little, and his pulpit was almost sure to proclaim it on the Sabbath. It certainly was for the edification of his people that this matter be speedily settled."

"And his other reason, which he judged might have some weight, was his own personal need of the daily solace and support of his chosen companion. He had worked hard in his field of labor; he had not recovered the elasticity lost by being overtasked; he was wayworn, alone, and often dispirited; he needed the sanctuary of home as a place of refuge; he wanted the steady light of a cheerful kindred spirit, to disperse the clouds which threatened to gather over him; he was all the while losing ground by delay; and, if he should fall into one of his old '*seminary*' moods, there was but one harp that could cast the evil spirit out, and he did not wish that to be played for such an end."

If Mary, at first, shook her head incredulously, she was now persuaded that, so far as *his* duty and interest were concerned, he was right. Though a tear twinkled in her eye, she assumed a mischievous smile; and, avoiding his glance, which she thought was looking too deeply into her heart, she told Mr. Edward Vernon that "she might have known when a *minister* asked for her hand, that there would be 'a *people*' somewhere to be taken into the account, in deciding questions of duty and propriety. If, therefore, she waived her objections, and let him arrange

matters as he liked, he need not consider it a tribute to himself but her first concession to his *office*. Henceforth she should expect to yield to the claims of the *profession*—only when she chose to have her own way."

Much more she was gayly saying, in the same vein, but Edward looked at her abstractedly, and grew quite serious. A new train of thought was started in his mind. "Was it not possible that he was introducing this bright young creature, with her quick conscientiousness and her ardent response to duty, into a life, in some sense, of self-sacrifice to an arduous and much-exacting profession? Was it right to take her, in the fresh dew of youth, from her father's hearth, where she had been sedulously shielded and cherished, to link her destiny henceforth with one whose path must lie, much of it, on the open heath, or rugged steep, beneath burning suns and sweeping storms?"

He looked so tenderly and anxiously upon her, that she questioned him of his thoughts, and he gave her the clue by asking if she would not much rather have found a companion in some other walk of life.

She tried to laugh, and inquired if the old strife between law and theology was about to be revived. He told her, "No; it was for her sake, simply, he asked the question. The life of a minister was one of peculiar trials, in which his wife must inevitably share."

His evident depth of feeling checked her playfulness, while she reiterated her sympathy in his choice of professions. She would have been content, indeed, to walk through life with *him* in any path he might have chosen; but she was satisfied he was in just the sphere he was designed to fill. The ministry was a noble work. She thought it not a hardship, but a privilege, to join him in it. She wished she were equally sure of her ability.

"But, when trials come, will you not look back, regret-

ful on this dear home where your days have passed so smoothly?"

"O, Edward!" said she, half-reproachfully; and then, smiling, added, "I do not anticipate such an amount of difficulty. Things that look formidable to you, alone, perhaps will seem trifling when we meet them together. But let that be as it will, if I may only do some good, I will not mind the trial — with *you*."

The young minister felt reassured, as he looked down on that earnest face, from whose brow of high resolve, and soft, clear eye, and mouth expressive of mingled gentleness, endurance and cheerful trust, might be traced the elements of the heroic Christian woman.

The evening was far spent, when Mr. Vernon suddenly remembered that he must be in his saddle at an early hour in the morning. It might, therefore, be wise to confer with his future father, before he slept. He rose to seek him in the library, yet lingered to remind Mary that she had only consented to the present month, without naming the day. She gave him her pocket companion, — "Daily Food," — and asked him to look for a marked date in October. He colored slightly as he found the 30th, with the initials E. V. He did not know how easily curious girls get access to sources of information on such topics. He was well pleased, however, to be married on his twenty-eighth birthday, and he reported to the doctor their united wishes to this effect.

The proposal was more graciously entertained than he had hoped. Dr. Allison was a sensible man, and appreciated fully the situation of the young clergyman.

"He had hoped to keep Mary with him a few years longer; but, if it seemed best, he was willing to give her up. The worst struggle with himself was already over. It was when he found another, and one hitherto a stranger, held the first place in that young heart which had ever given him its best

earthly love. He was astonished at his own selfishness; he confessed, it cost him a great struggle."

"Mary is young," he added, "yet she has always been, with all her playfulness, mature beyond her years; and, if she makes as good a wife as daughter, you will have no reason to complain."

During this quiet interview in the library, Miss Allison had sought her sister in the parlor, and, learning the state of things, was loud in her protestations against "such hasty proceedings."

"Get ready for a wedding and for house-keeping in less than four weeks! It is not to be thought of. Besides, Mary, what do you know of house-keeping? O, it is so foolish! and you so young! You little know what it is to have any care; and then, your poor father, what will he do without you? It will be so sudden to him, — and William going so soon!"

The tears were in Mary's throat, but she choked them down, as she heard returning footsteps towards the parlor. The wise sister turned now to the gentlemen, and told Mr. Vernon he did not know what trouble he was bringing upon himself. "Why, sir," said she, waxing warm, "this child is n't fit to take care of you, this twelve-month. She has never made a loaf of bread. I doubt whether she would get you up a decent dinner. She has not yet looked into the mysteries of starch and smoothing-irons. She sometimes makes a little cake, or pastry, but she would not know when her oven was hot, or her pies baked. She 'd make fifty mistakes a week. You can't think of it. Take my advice, and leave her under my hand a year. I 'll engage to turn her out a good house-keeper. Very important, Mr. Vernon, for a *minister* to have a wife that knows how" —

"O," said he, quite unmoved, "this thing comes from good judgment and observation. Mary, having had so good an example before her eyes, will go on as if by instinct. I have no fear about that."

"Well, how should you know anything about it? *She* ought

to know that it is one thing to see others go on right, and quite another to undertake herself alone. It 's the *practice* she wants. She might remember how some things are done at home, but she must do them with her own hands, to know how."

'Well, suppose that, considering her home-advantages, I am willing to run the risk of it; and that she consents to begin under this disadvantage, to save the inconvenience and trouble?"

A quick reply was forthcoming, when the doctor laid his hand on his daughter Harriet's shoulder, and told her that "the thing being *decided*, we have only to make the best of it. Besides, *you* are a little in fault here. You have been over-indulgent to Mary, or she would not be found, at eighteen, quite so ignorant of domestic matters as your words imply. I believe, however, she has no foolish prejudice against this class of duties. Her inexperience may cause *her* some discomfort, but she will, without doubt, acquire skill. I foresee I must spare you, to begin with her and set her out straight."

These words had a very lubricating effect, and Miss Allison — for she was a very energetic person — entered warmly into certain plans and arrangements in reference to the important era so near at hand. She even listened with silent attention to Mr. Vernon's history of his measures to secure a house in Salem, and to his expressed purpose to take possession by the middle of November, allowing two weeks only for a wedding tour. But, though silent, she was not meanwhile inactive. Her fertile brain was busy in projecting, computing and devising, — maintaining its equipoise 'mid such an influx of heterogeneous materials as fill out the elaborate advertisement of some "dry goods and grocery establishment," and as would totally inundate and overset a less evenly balanced mind.

Mary, who always has a thought for others, finds time to inquire after a poor, sick woman, whom Edward in his last letter spoke of visiting; also, if there were any new developments

in the religious character of Esquire Lewis' daughters, about whom the young pastor had expressed some solicitude. She learns that Widow Harrison is still spared to pray, and that the Misses Lewis continue attentive to the externals of a Christian life. Perhaps he has wronged them by his doubt. He should think of expressing it to no one but his *other self*.

The evening had passed rapidly on near to the midnight hour, as Miss Allison gave her last look at the preparations for early breakfast, and hastened toward her chamber. She thought herself the last to retire; but, as she stepped into the hall, a light was burning in the library, and her father was sitting just as Mary had left him, a half hour since, with her good-night kiss. He looked absorbed and anxious. She uttered an exclamation of surprise that he had not gone to his room, and added, "This sudden marriage troubles you, father. Well, I do not wonder. Mary seems to us a mere child; and she *is* too young. We may well have some fears on her account."

"Yes, Harriet; I would rather she were two years older but then she is plastic, and will be the more easily assimilated to her new sphere and relationships. Her youth, on the whole, does not much disturb me. I was thinking of *him*, — of Edward; he is very sensitive, — somewhat morbidly so, I judge."

"I haven't noticed it. He always seems to take in good part my plain way of speaking. He was cool enough, to-night, when I spoke so warmly against his plans. I think you must judge from the bumps; — he has rather a peculiar head."

"No; I am more of a physiognomist, you know; and his face is quite a study. I cannot be mistaken in the full, humid eye, pensive in repose; the finely-curved, full, flexible lip, tremulous with every changing emotion; in the reaction that follows every flush of excited feeling. I feel it, too, when conversing with him, in his quick detection and discrimination of my own varying shades of emotion. I am often unconscious of some variation of feeling till he responds to it by the curl of

his lip, or the flash of his eye. He is like a thermometer, — up or down with the atmosphere. I wish, for his own sake and for Mary's, that his sensibilities were less exquisite."

"Why, Mary is just the one to sympathize with such a nature. You have always said she had a world of sensibility. She will understand him and feel for him. I should n't worry about that;" and she turned away with a "good-night."

"*Feel for him!* yes, and *with* him, — too exquisitely, I fear, for her own happiness. But that I must trust to her best Friend;" and in his heart he folded his darling the more closely, and, with his blessing on her, struggled up the unspoken, yet fervent wish, "O, that I could enfold thee here, while I live, and shield thee thus from the roughnesses of life!"

CHAPTER V.

"A prize to be contested by the skill
Of mothers and their daughters."

"My son, of muckle speaking ill advised,
And where a little speaking had sufficed,
Cometh muckle harm. This was told me and taught me —
In muckle speaking, *sinning* wanteth not."

"Rumor, in temporary things, is gigantic."

The young pastor returned to Salem, to find his secret known, and his usually quiet parish in somewhat of a ferment.

Esther Ann Brooks, the milliner, had been to the city, for the fall fashions, and come home with important news. In the shop where she traded was an apprentice, lately come from Plympton, who had a sister doing housework in Mayfield, an adjoining town. She lived close by Dr. Allison's, and knew of his daughter's engagement to the Salem minister. She had

been home on a visit, and, for want of other topics, had detailed this latest news from Mayfield; exhausting all that was known and conjectured, and drawing on her imagination for enough to fill out a good story. The shop-girl remembered the Salem milliner, and laid up the precious piece of gossip till she should see her at No. 7 Blonde-street.

Finding Esther Ann with both ears open, she imparted all she had received, with her own speculations thereon. By the time the ball had rolled on to Salem, it was grown quite formidable in size, with its small admixture of truth very ingeniously distributed throughout its staple commodity, exaggeration and error.

Esther Ann's little brown shop was now the centre of attraction, not so much on account of its new millinery as of the information there dispensed on the subject of the young minister's "matrimonials." Almost every one was taken by surprise. Some, who had benevolently selected for him, were not a little piqued. A few, who had still nearer hopes, sighed as they were thus dashed at a single stroke.

Esquire Lewis' daughters were among the first that called, and they were not easily suited in the choice of bonnets. One after another was examined and rejected, being used as foils to hide their excessive interest in the one topic on which they resolved to pump Miss Brooks dry.

"You are sure this report is true?"

"Yes, I am sure of it [that bonnet, Miss Lucretia, is a good fit], for the girl said, her sister saw him every time he came. He has visited her ever since last June [there, the brim wants raising a little. I can lap it under the crown]. He met her first away from home, — somewhere she was visiting, — that time he was gone so long, you remember."

"Let me look at that drawn silk. What did you hear of the family, Esther Ann?"

"Well, as good as any in Mayfield; — hold their heads pretty high, I guess [that white straw, Miss Helen, will look

sweetly on you]. The girl said, her sister said, she heard the gentleman where she lived say, that the doctor was a clever man, and the girl well enough; but he had a son in New York [the price of that is three dollars], — a half-brother of hers in New York was a slippery kind of a man, — lived in dashing style. If his debts were paid he would n't own a cent."

"I don't quite like this white straw, Esther Ann. What more did you hear of the young lady herself?"

"[Try this French lace.] Not much, except what I told you. She 's young and pretty; has always been kept at school [there, that 's a complete fit. Just look in the glass]."

"Never mind; finish what you were saying."

"They say her father has been very choice of her, because she lost her mother so young; and he 's brought her up to books, and music, and drawing, and all that sort of thing." The young ladies winked to each other under the shield of the bonnets. "That girl's sister did n't seem to like her much. She said there were some families in Mayfield that thought hired girls good enough to associate with anybody; but she had lived six months right over the way from Dr. Allison's, and had not been able to get acquainted with Miss Mary. She said she was always flaunted out with her neck full of curls. She 'll have to put 'em up now, I guess [will you take those two bonnets?]."

"You may lay them aside. We 'll not conclude till mother has been in and looked at them. You did n't hear when the wedding is to come off, did you?"

"No; they *guessed not* in some time, — she is so young; but I find some folks here think he has gone now to make arrangements."

"O, no; he has gone to his father's."

"Well, you know the Whitman place is to be sold; and they say Mr. Cook talks of buying it. Since this thing has come out, many think Mr. Cook is trying to get the place for Mr. Vernon. What would he want of another house himself?

Miss Leevy asked him about it, yesterday; and he told her, if he purchased it, there would be some one in this fall. I hope Leevy will give it up now. She 's tried hard enough to catch him."

The Misses Lewis could hear no more, but bit their lips for vexation, and went home to report to their intriguing mama. Mrs. Lewis was not prepared for the failure of her deep-laid schemes. She had withdrawn her daughters from gay society, taken them to hear every sermon, sent them to all the prayer-meetings, drawn them in to the circle of inquirers, rejoiced over their growing interest in religious things, encouraged them to make an early profession of their faith, as fruits of the revival; and now to be disappointed thus! Between the two, she had thought herself secure. Lucretia was of just the right age, — twenty-five. Helen, she knew, was very pleasing, though she had supposed her too young; yet *she* was nineteen last month.

She tried to vent her disappointment in displeasure at the innocent cause of it. "She would not have believed Mr. Vernon such a deceitful man; — coming here, so pleasantly, week after week; so many interviews as he had had alone with Lucretia, and so ready as he had been to ride in their carriage to the neighborhood meetings. It was too bad. He could not be the man she had thought him."

And there were others to echo this "too bad." There was the shrewd, match-making Mrs. Pritchard, who had recommended no less than three of her favorites to Mr. Vernon. Another lady of the parish had boarded a niece from the city two summers, with an eye to the cultivation of a special acquaintance. No wonder *she* felt injured!

Poor Olivia Cook, or "Miss Leevy," as she was generally called, took the matter most to heart. She was a maiden of twenty-eight, with many good qualities, yet placed by circumstances on the very verge of that unenviable position in society which exposes one to the derisive appellation of "spinster." Like many others of this much-abused class, she was once a

bright young girl in a happy home; but, early deprived of natural guardians, and thrown on her own resources for a maintenance, she had gone as seamstress from house to house these many years, during all of which she was supposed to be on the look-out for a settlement in life. And what harm in this fact, simply? Her wandering life gave to the word "home" a double charm, and she was consciously qualified for an industrious, frugal, and loving wife. Why should she be ridiculed for coveting the relation?

Miss Leevy had for some time been quite literary and theological in her tastes. Indeed, it was said she might once or twice have had a comfortable home, if she had not aspired to a parsonage. She was a niece of Deacon Ely's wife; and, as his house was her head-quarters, she saw a good deal of ministerial company during the long interregnum that preceded the ordination of Mr. Vernon. With him she assiduously cultivated acquaintance, and made herself at times quite agreeable. She was active during the revival; and, though often officious, he felt that she had at heart the welfare of the Redeemer's cause. In the Sabbath-school and praying-circle she was ever at her post. True, she might be thought to overstep the bounds of maidenly reserve, in her frequent visits at Mr. Vernon's boarding-place; but Mr. Cook was her "second cousin," and she had always been in the habit of calling there. That she should feel a deep and growing regard for her minister — and such a man, too — was natural enough. That she had any *special expectations* from him, she would not allow to her own thoughts. That he had become the centre of her thoughts, and hopes, and movements, she was not aware till this fatal rumor reached her ear. Was she not to be pitied? Yet for cases like this society has no pity, — it has only caustic words, or careless laughter.

Among the many who called at the milliner's shop, came Mrs. Deacon Ely, — not to purchase a new bonnet, or a fresh

ribbon for the old one, — but to administer a few words of caution to the gossiping Miss Brooks.

Mrs. Ely was a plain, sensible, matronly woman, open-hearted and liberal-handed, a friend to everybody, and a quiet yet fearless advocate of the truth.

We may not stop here to inquire how much the good deacon was indebted to his help-meet for the fact that he was — what in these days is so rarely found — a *model* in the deaconship.

Mrs. Ely talked like a mother to Esther Ann; told her that "such roundabout stories as she had imported were sure to be exaggerated; — perhaps it would turn out entirely false; and then how mortifying it would be to her! But, even if the main fact should prove true, how little judgment had she shown in circulating reports about it that had set the whole parish in a flurry! It was not prudent, neither was it kind toward their minister. We ought to have more confidence in him, than to suppose he would marry 'a gay, idle young flirt,' as some are calling her.

"She had really thought we were wiser here than some places that make a breeze about their minister's marriage. She hoped these reports would not reach Mr. Vernon's ear, — his feelings are so easily touched. It 's time he married; and people ought to be pleased that, so particular as he is, there is a prospect of his being suited."

With such and many like words was the weak-minded girl brought to feel her imprudence; and with tears she promised Mrs. Ely that she would not agitate the matter any more.

It was almost night, — the night of his return, — when the unconscious subject of so much busy speculation entered the village, with the reins lying loose on Pompey's neck, looking here and there for a smiling welcome, after a five days' absence. He met one and another, returning from their day's work in the field, but their manner seemed to him peculiar. Some looked at him suspiciously, and others fixedly; and one passed him with averted eyes What could it mean?

At an angle of the green he met Esquire Lewis, who seemed in haste, and less boisterous than usual in his salutations. A something unwonted so impressed him, that he called after the esquire, with an inquiry after his family, and the people in general; but only received a cool "All well, I believe."

He rode musingly across the green, and overtook two young girls, to whom he spake, as ever, with pleasant greetings. One, though cordial in her reply, colored deeply; the other was Bessie Crampton, a favorite of his, to whom he had lately introduced a classmate. Bessie's face wore a comic expression, and her roguish eyes flashed upon him such intelligence that he could not forbear an answering smile of conscious betrayal, and a quick, sympathetic glance, which said plainly, "We understand each other." He knew that his secret was out.

He found Miss Leevy at Mr. Cook's when he entered. She received him with a painfully embarrassed air, and was missing when he came from his room to tea.

Mrs. Cook confirmed his conviction that tidings of his intended marriage had reached Salem, wisely suppressing the embellishments that had caused such a sensation among the people.

Mr. Vernon was now open to inquiry respecting his plans; and it was soon generally known that he had purchased a house, and that he was to be married on the thirtieth instant.

CHAPTER VI.

"Echo, on the zephyrs gliding,
Bears a voice that seems to say,
'Ears and hearts, come list my tiding,
This has been a wedding-day.'"

The nuptial day of their minister passed not unnoted by the people of his charge. As that beautiful October morning dawned on hill-top and glebe, many a heart in Salem sent out

its fervent blessing on a union, in which was felt a near and practical interest. Many a quick fancy traversed the thirty miles of carriage-road to Mayfield, in season to witness the marriage ceremony; and, though they could see only the figure of the bride, he who clasped her hand stood before their mind's eye as distinct in form and feature as when they saw him in the pulpit the last Sabbath.

Aunt Rachel, Mrs. Cook's invalid boarder, was almost beside herself with joy. She declared it was the finest day of the month, and that "heaven and earth were smiling on the union." Having none but distant kindred, she loved her young minister next to her God, — with a love, too, that partook largely of reverence and worship. She had asked him the exact hour of the ceremony; and when eight o'clock arrived, she was nervously fumbling the leaves of an old hymn-book, and it soon became apparent that she was about to honor the event with a song. True, she was very deaf, and her voice was a stringless instrument; but the psalm-tunes she sang in girlhood were fresh in her memory, and she "made melody in her heart," if not to the Lord, at least to the under-shepherd, who led her into green pastures, beside the still waters of salvation.

As neighbors met, that day, the first thing that followed their salutations was, "I suppose our minister is married this morning." There were a few who followed up the theme by an ominous shake of the head, and auguries of evil.

The afternoon of the same day, — whether the coincidence was designed does not appear, — there was a gathering of the ladies, a mile out of the village, at Deacon Ely's. Now that the hurry of harvesting was over, Mrs. Ely found a pause in which to quilt a comfortable that she had promised to a wretched family in the neighborhood. She was a woman who found the right time for everything. Hence there was no confusion in her house, and nothing planned was given up for want of ability to accomplish it. Four grown-up sons, without a sister, made large demands upon her; yet she always moved about

with the same even, energetic step, and placid, motherly countenance.

Two or three days before this gathering, she might have been seen, after her dinner-work was done, stripping up the skirts of old dresses, and putting them in proper shape for a bed-covering. This done, a general invitation to the quilting was circulated through the district, and sent over to the village. As the result of this, some twenty married ladies and maidens met in the long dining-room, at two o'clock, with nimble fingers and tongues, prepared, as usual, to carry on a double line of operations.

After the work was marked off, the frame let down at the corners on the old kitchen chairs to the proper level, and duly tied with tow strings, — after the ladies, with much jostling and running under the quilt, were all seated, the choice of thread discussed, and the size of needles compared, — the way was opened for conversation on any topic of general interest.

As might have been predicted, there was but *one* absorbing theme; and that, introduced in a whisper, soon went round the circle, till the loud hum of voices, and the warm expression of various opinions, might have jarred on the ear of a disinterested spectator.

First, were collated all the historic items that had received publicity through Esther Ann Brooks, and through the replies of Mr. Vernon himself to those who had the assurance to question him. These, interspersed with various comments, occupied no little time; so that the quilt was rolled twice on both sides before the party reached the next broad field of remark — conjecture. At one right angle of the quilt several young ladies discussed the wedding habiliments and arrangements; — whether the bride would be attired in white, or in a travelling dress, — whether there would be a large or a small party, — would they have music at a morning wedding, — in honor to the new temperance movement, would they dispense with wine;

and would the wedding-cake be — any of it — brought to Salem for distribution.

There, a more elderly group were chatting about the house lately purchased, — what repairs were needed and going forward, — which rooms would be re-papered, and what would be the quality of the furniture, and the style of living. Somebody wondered if Mrs. Vernon would bring her piano with her. Carrie Wood, the youngest of the party, clapped her hands at this suggestion, and "hoped so; she should dearly love to hear her play, as she had not yet seen a piano." The city girl, who had come with her Aunt Hoadley to this novel "sociable," put up her lip in a contemptuous curl, and looked compassionately on the unsophisticated girl of fifteen, who had never seen a piano.

Meanwhile, good Mrs. Ely had succeeded in enlisting half a dozen ladies, among whom was Bessie Crampton, in her proposal to make up a little wardrobe for the coming need of the destitute woman for whose benefit they were quilting.

The next turn the conversation took was upon the bearings of this new connection on the welfare of the parish.

One lady thought "it *would* have been a disastrous thing, had it occurred last winter, in the height of the revival, — it makes so much talk!" Another said, "We could not expect the minister to visit as much as he had done among the people; she guessed some would miss him." A third, "thought it doubtful whether he would find as much time to study his sermons."

The good-natured Mrs. Cook said, "It would be a happy thing for *him*, if it only kept off that melancholy look he had nearly all last spring, when she used to ask him what was the matter, and he told her, 'the blues.'"

The withered, sallow-looking Mrs. Buel thought "he ought to consider what was for the good of the people."

Mrs. Ely came to the rescue, and asked "how it appeared that he was not mindful of the interests of the people. A good minister's wife was certainly an acquisition to any community

She helps the pastor, makes for him a pleasant home, increases the social feeling between him and his people, and is a blessing to them in many ways. There is no need of so much excitement. We should not be prejudiced so easily against one we have never seen."

"Well," said the little, bustling Mrs. Coleman, "when she comes, I hope she will get up some parties, or sewing-circles, or something else; it 's so horribly dull here. We only want a person to take the lead, to have something going on here as well as in other places."

"Take the lead!" said Miss Leevy; "who do you think will look up to a young girl of eighteen?" There was a significant laugh around the circle. She felt a hand on the back of her chair, and, looking round, saw Dr. Alden standing behind her.

He had come over to superintend the moving of some hay, bought of Deacon Ely; and, while the men were busy at the barn, he took the liberty to look in upon the quilting party.

"What 's all this about?" said the good doctor.

"O," said one of the girls, "just as if you don't know, Dr Alden; you have been in the door these ten minutes."

"Well, well," said he; "be a little reasonable now, ladies. This talk about youth and inexperience is all moonshine. One would suppose you expected a good minister's wife to be found, like some garments, ready cut and made, — a complete fit. It 's no such thing; it 's the training *in* the sphere, that qualifies them *for* it, though some have more native congeniality to the station than others. I don't like this ado at prescribing what sort of a woman a minister shall marry. For my part, I would not have them all 'as like as two peas.' There are certain fundamental things which every wise man — and, of course, every minister — should look well to, at the beginning, — *good, common sense, sincere piety*, and *mental culture*, — these lie at the foundation.

"Take any young woman with these essentials, and unite her with one whom she loves with unselfish devotion; let his

profession be the ministry, and she will shape her course as may best subserve his sphere in life. She may make some mistakes for a while; but let her conscientiously discharge duties as they rise, and it will not be long before she will settle down into an exemplary minister's wife."

"But," said Mrs. Pritchard, appealingly, "don't you think, Dr. Alden, that, in such an important matter, a minister should *take advice*, and be guided by the judgment of others?"

"Undoubtedly, ma'am," said the doctor, with assumed gravity; "since she is to be the wife of the parish, he should select a committee of some half-dozen of his most experienced ladies and wed by proxy; only he might be a *little* past his prime, before they would *agree* in their choice."

"O, doctor!" said Mrs. Coleman; "you are always so queer I shall make you own, now, that you think Mr. Vernon is taking too young a bride."

"A little doubtful, Mrs. Coleman. If she is young, she will have less to unlearn, and will be moulded the more easily, and adapt herself with less difficulty to what is peculiar to the profession. But, then," — he added thoughtfully, — "she may be more susceptible to untoward influences from the people; we can do much, doubtless, to make her young life happy, or uncomfortable."

"You are getting quite serious, doctor," said Mrs. Hoadley. "I am sure, nobody wishes her any harm; but who would have thought Mr. Vernon would be the man to be attracted by a pretty face?"

"You have seen her, then," said he; "you have the advantage of us."

"Now, doctor, you know better," replied the lady, with some confusion.

"O, your *niece* here, may have met her."

"No, no; but we have all heard about her, from those who have seen her."

"I beg your pardon," said the doctor, rising; "to be young

and pretty, one would think a crime." Several pairs of bright eyes were suddenly raised from their work. "Well, well," added he, "if it is, I know of some others in the same condemnation;" and, squinting slyly with his gray eyes toward the corner of the quilt where sat Bessie and Carrie, he nodded a "good day, ladies," and departed.

The needles were now plied with renewed diligence, as Mrs Cook remarked that this room would be wanted to set the table in, and the quilt must come off before tea.

Mrs. Ely called Leevy out to help her get tea; and, when they reached the pantry, she softly shut the door, and asked her niece "what she meant by making such an imprudent remark, and begged her, for her own sake, to keep still; people would be drawing inferences from her appearance, and she ought to be more careful;" with many like words of caution.

To her surprise, Leevy let fall two or three large tears, and replied, "she was not aware she spoke so warmly till the words were out of her lips; she was sorry, and would try to do better."

"Yes," said her aunt; "and, when Mr. Vernon returns with his wife, I hope you will not be backward, Leevy, in calling on her. You know, as well as I, how much has been said about your visiting *him;* now is your time to show people that they have had no reason for talking as they have done."

To this Leevy made no reply, and her aunt, for once, was puzzled what to think of her.

We will stay no longer at the quilting-party, for this is a wedding-day, and it should bring us into a more genial atmosphere.

In a capacious parlor in Mayfield, 'mid the perfume of fading flowers, there linger yet the breath of warm hearts, and the fragrance of honeyed lips, and the dew of gentle tears, and the soft, faint echoes of the nuptial song, and the sweeter melody of farewell voices, and the far-off solemn rustling of angel

wings. Yet, to a casual observer, the place wears the stillness of a deserted house.

The owner of the mansion, with feelings that make leisure dreaded, has gone to visit a distant invalid.

Two or three young theologues are retracing their steps to the seminary; while twice that number of blooming girls are wondering if they will ever find their way again to Mayfield.

The young missionary-elect is, by this time, seated in a train of cars for "down-east," with a dark-eyed, thoughtful girl by his side.

The New York brother and his gay wife are on the Sound. The maiden mistress of the establishment, whose head, and heart, and hands, have been so heavily taxed these many days, has found her first leisure moment for a crying-spell; and is now alone in her chamber, actually indulging the unwonted luxury of tears.

As for the newly-married pair, they have, since nine o'clock, journeyed many a mile of carriage-road, over hill and dale, unwearied by the long, rough way, — with a joy in their hearts too deep for a constant flow of words, and a sympathy so perfect as to make a medium even of silence.

Already has Edward pointed out the spires of his native town; and now they leave the dusty thoroughfare, for the narrow road, with its midway strip of green, that leads up to the farm-house.

Nor is their visit unexpected, as the air of readiness, and the many eager faces in waiting, amply testify.

Ere the carriage reaches the place, the new husband turns to look at his bride; he notices a sudden accession of color to her cheek and a fluttering of the heart, — as what bride does not remember, who was presented a stranger to her husband's relatives? He tries to scan her with other eyes than his own, and the result seems quite satisfactory; for he whispers, "I know they will love you, Mary."

Brother James is the first at the carriage-side, and has

looked into his new sister's face, and smiled, and bowed, ere there is time for the formal words of presentation. She is quite at her ease, as she feels the warm, brotherly grasp of his strong hand, and responds to his cordial welcome with a kiss. The four boys are straggling down the path from the door to the gate, — all, but one, awkward and confused, in the vain attempt to recall what they were to say and do on this important occasion. Master Eddie alone is self-possessed; and, disappointed at seeing a large white horse before the carriage, he disregards all ceremony, and vociferates, "Uncle Ned, why didn't you come with black Pompey? — I say it's too bad." The aged father is on the step, and sister Laura in the door-way with the baby. But Edward makes his salutations brief till he gains the hall, and clasps his mother in his arms. Nor does he prolong his embrace, eager to consummate the meeting of the two beings whom he loves best on earth. And how does his own eye moisten as he sees the tears involuntary, start on either side, — the warm gush from the full cistern, the single bright drop from the fountain nearly spent!

To the aged matron, the scene recalled her buried daughter; and, by a similar force of association, Mary's lips no sooner vibrated with the word "mother," than it awoke in her heart the old memories of childhood and of her one great sorrow.

After a generous supper, which was waiting the arrival of the youthful pair, they spent a pleasant hour in the "old north room;" one on either side of mother's chair, alone with her. Mary had never seen Edward look so happy or so lovable as now, in the home of his childhood, by his mother's knee. Blessed place! where the man shakes off the dust and cares of life, and becomes a child again.

An evening stroll in the glorious moonlight! — through the orchard, beneath the large old apple-trees; down the smooth green hill-side; under the willows by the river bank, where the boy angled for perch; to the moss-covered rock, in whose shaded niche the student was wont to con his book; back to

the rustic porch, where the fragrant honey-suckle, so often trained by hands that will never train it more, is yet studded with blossoms; and the moon, looking through the lattice, makes mosaic of the sanded step.

That same moon, on the eve of this wedding-day, far to the east, looks in through a muslin curtain to a homely, yet neat and comfortable chamber, where, kneeling beside her bed, a lowly maiden, alone with her Bible and her God, is striving to calm a fevered spirit, and struggling for victory over *self* in its most subtle guise. Poor Leevy! —

"O, happiness! O, unrest!"

CHAPTER VII.

"She's a *woman* — one in whom
The spring-time of her childish years
Shall never lose its fresh perfume,
Though knowing well that life hath room
For many blights and tears."

"A thousand thoughts of all things dear,
Like shadows o'er me sweep;
I leave my sunny childhood here,
O, therefore, let me weep!"

THE people at the homestead could not fail to admire and love Edward's young wife; yet, in the brief acquaintance of a few days, they did not come to appreciate her maturity and strength of character. Occasionally they betrayed to Edward that they regarded her rather as his *pet* than companion. The old gentleman caressed her, and called her his "little girl." Brother James would sometimes say, laughingly, "he should like to see her taking care of a house." Sister Laura ventured to ask her "what Salem people would say to a married lady — and their minister's wife, too, — with her neck full of curls?" Mary quietly replied, "that she had worn her hair in this way

ever since she could remember; and, of course, to her friends it looked most natural and becoming; but it was not stereotyped thus, and she could put up the curls any time. Indeed, she had tried it once, but" —

"Edward objected, I venture," interposed sister Laura. She looked over her shoulder. He was there to speak for himself.

"O!" said he, "it was the morning of our marriage. The carriage was waiting. Mary came from the library, whither she had gone to put on her bonnet. I saw the change, at a glance, and whispered, 'What is this?' She answered, 'My second concession to the good of the parish.' I told her we were not going to Salem yet, but to my birth-place; and I must take her there just as I had found her. So we were delayed a half-hour, to rectify the mistake."

This incident led to a discussion as to how far a minister's family should conform to the notions of their parishioners, in regard to dress and style of living. Mary expressed her views with sufficient modesty, yet with so much firmness that sister Laura, in rehearsing the matter to her husband, declared her surprise that "the girl was so spirited and independent."

The last afternoon of the visit, Master Eddie came home from school, with loud complaints that his brothers had gone off, and left him to play alone. His new aunt had taken quite a fancy to the child. She told him *she* would play with him if that would do.

"O! but, auntie," said he, "you will not run with me in the yard, and play catch."

"Certainly I will," she replied; and the romp began.

James and Edward stood in the porch, and watched them both with pleasure, — one with evident pride and satisfaction, as the young bride's silvery laugh rung out, and the glow heightened on her cheek, and the glossy curls were tossed to and fro on her bare neck.

"They are about the same age," said James. "It 's a pretty picture, Ned; but I fear she is too much of a child for you."

Edward's eyes were already moist with silent thanksgivings that so bright and joyous a gift had been vouchsafed him. When he spoke, it was with a feeling and emphasis that startled his brother.

"It was this very thing, James, — what you call childish gayety; this buoyancy and freshness of feeling, — that won me at the first. I had grown old in spirit; fevered with the heat and burden of my professional cares, I was faint and worn when I first met her; and I welcomed her converse as you do the cooling shade at noon, in your sun-burnt fields. It was like the green grove and bubbling fountain to the heated traveller at mid-day. It seemed to take me back ten years, and to renew my early youth. True, there were other qualities which found a deeper place in my heart; but it was this which first attracted and charmed me."

"But," said James, "this 'freshness,' as you call it, cannot last. The season of girlhood will soon be passed."

"I don't know about that," said the other, quickly. "If it were the mere effervescence of animal spirits, time might exhaust the fountain; but it is, with Mary, something more than that; — it is part of her temperament; an element, too, that has great tenacity of life. I believe it possible to retain it even till old age; and how delightful to be always young, — always fresh in feeling! There may be much to try it, much to quench it; but, even to the last, traces of the old playfulness will remain; like the effervescing draught, it will sparkle at the bottom of the glass."

"You are quite eloquent, Edward; and tears in your eyes, too! Well, I hope you will realize all you anticipate; but why look so grave? I have not displeased you?"

"No," said Edward; "I was straining my eyes to look into the distant future; and a prophetic mood was fast coming over me. You think I love too well, James."

"I have not said that, brother. I don't know as I think it. *She* loves *you* tenderly, I can see, notwithstanding she is somewhat shy of caresses; and you ought to give her all your heart, — that is, as much of it as you may lawfully give to any earthly object. But do not make an idol of her, brother. Are you not in some danger of this?"

Edward's thoughts, just then, took a sudden impetus, as Mary came tripping round the corner, with Eddie in full chase; and, bounding from the porch, he caught them both at once, and put an end to the race

It was the middle of November when Edward and Mary returned from their wedding tour, and found the dear home in Mayfield (never had it seemed dearer) alive with the bustle of preparation for their house-keeping. The carpets had been selected previously to the marriage, the floors they were to cover measured, and they were now ready to be laid as soon as wanted. The cabinet furniture, too, was purchased at the same time, and stood boxed in the distant city, ready to be forwarded per order. Three seamstresses, with busy needles, under Miss Allison's supervision, had now nearly completed their task; and, in the expressive words of Ann, the domestic, there had been "lots o' sewing done in this house since the wedding."

The eighteenth was a clear, frosty morning. The house was a-stir before day-dawn. Mary woke with the first sound; for even in sleep she had not lost the consciousness that she was to set forth to-day for a new home. Presently a light was brought to her door, and she dressed as hastily as possible, that she might have a little time to herself before breakfast.

Lighting her own lamp, she placed it on the shelf for Edward, and, taking the other, slipped out, and round to her own little chamber, which had been her resting-place and sanctuary ever since her childhood.

Her heart was very, very full; and the emotions, how mingled, how tender, how strong! She sought her accustomed place of prayer, and bowed her head; but it was many minutes

ere she could command her voice. Then, when utterance came how earnest were the pleadings, and how often interrupted, — now for a gush of tears, and now for recollections which furnished new materials for supplication, or fresh matter for giving of thanks!

O, what a relief is *prayer* to the burdened Christian! What like this can still the convulsive heart-throbbings, or give composure and strength to the soul?

Every believer has his *signal* visits to the mercy-seat; — places where, like Jacob, he sets up a memorial, to look back upon through all his after pilgrimage; — times when, as a prince, he had power with God, and prevailed.

Such was this early-morning interview to Mary. Tranquillized and refreshed, she rose, and drew the curtain toward the rising day. A few stars were yet in the sky, and the faint streaks of daylight rapidly brightened, till every feature of the familiar landscape stood revealed. Distant, in the dusky twilight, she could trace the white enclosure of the quiet churchyard; and she gazed till the increasing dawn showed her the weeping-willow by her sainted mother's grave.

But neither the sight of that consecrated spot, nor the thought of what a home she was leaving, nor the image of her father, sorrowing, as he should miss her, from day to day, nor the pressure of untried and weighty responsibilities, nor the lively sense of her own weakness and deficiency, had power to disturb her now. A holy peace was in her heart. That heart was stayed on God, and its one deep aspiration was to honor Christ by a life spent in doing good.

One hurried look around the chamber, and she went down to the breakfast table, with traces of tears on her cheek, but with a halo round her that told of sunlight in her heart.

Edward led the family worship. His prayer was brief and tender. Mary felt that he must know something of what had been passing in her own thoughts. He doubtless had some appreciation of the circumstances, as they would naturally affect

one of her ardent susceptibilities. Beyond this, had he any idea of the scope and depth of her emotions, at this great crisis in her history? We trow not. Just now, and on this point, Mary's *father* had for her a more perfect sympathy than her husband. He could not trust himself to part with her *here*; so he resolved to slip away from his business, for a single night, and see her to house-keeping.

The cavalcade was soon under way. Dick was first sent off, with the loaded team; then the married pair were helped away; and, lastly, the doctor fairly started, with his elder daughter, after sundry delays, caused by her "more last words" to Ann, about the care of things during her absence. Every vehicle was laden to its utmost capacity. The last article, which was to go "this side up, with care," was a basket of provisions, prepared by the hands of the skilful housewife, which Edward insisted might be dispensed with, as the generosity of his people would doubtless make it a work of supererogation; to which Miss Harriet, as she carefully deposited it at her feet, replied, with a knowing look, "We shall see."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Young wife, be not as a timid girl; there is honor due to thine estate."

"It *snowed* within his house, of meat and drink."

"O happy lot, and hallowed, even as the joy of angels,
Where the golden chain of godliness is entwined with the roses of love!"

It was at a late dinner-hour that our travellers entered the village of Salem, and, passing through it, a quarter of a mile beyond the church, stopped at the low, red house which had long been the minister's boarding place.

Sister Harriet, with her usual independence, rebelled somewhat at this arrangement. "We had better go at once to the

new house. We have enough to eat, and can make ourselves quite comfortable." But Mr. Vernon had yielded a promise to Mrs. Cook's earnest solicitation that he would bring the bride to dine with her. So he just reminded their sister that it was one thing to be mistress of ceremonies at Mayfield, and quite another to be his guest in Salem. She must hold herself at his disposal.

Aunt Rachel was in her element, and knew not which most to admire, — the gentle, blooming girl, or the kind, sensible, gentlemanly doctor, who patiently heard the story of her ailments, and recommended several remedies which she had never tried.

After dinner, Mary asked Edward to let her take a peep at his room, — his "bachelor sanctum;" but his landlady overheard, and begged he would not go up stairs, as the chambers were not in order to-day. Miss Allison, too, interposed, saying it would be needful to go to work at once, if they accomplished anything toward furnishing the house before night. Mrs. Cook informed them that she had seen to the cleaning, and that the rooms were all dry and aired, ready to begin, and she would go over with them.

The whole village was by this time aware of the arrival. Many a stealthy glance was taken behind half-closed shutters, or slightly drawn curtains, beside the open gaze from shop-doors and wayside. Mary felt that many curious eyes were scanning her, and she was glad to be fairly within the protecting walls of her own dwelling.

Presently a group of ladies gathered, proffering their assistance, to whom the young pastor, as fast as they arrived, presented his bride. A company of men were round the door, helping the doctor and Dick take off the load; and many a pair of eyes from without peered curiously in, at every entrance, to get a glimpse of the minister's wife.

Mr. Vernon now told Mrs. Cook, if other ladies came she must attend to them while he was gone to change his attire, which he must do before he could go to work in earnest. She

put her hand on his arm, as he was passing out, and said, "I don't know as you will like it, sir, the liberty we 've taken; but I thought 't would help a good deal, it 's so near the last of the week, if your study was moved over before you came; — so we did it yesterday."

A troubled expression crossed his face, as he thought of books and papers passing through hands unused to such freight; but his next thought was a grateful one, and a smile and word of thanks were on his lips as the good woman added, "We were very careful, sir, of everything. There were men enough to lift, and so we took nothing out of the drawers, either in the library or secretary. Just run up, and see how you like it."

"Ah!" said she, as they reached the door, "you will not need to stoop here; it 's higher between joints than our old place."

"So, here we are, sure enough!" said the minister, with a delight which Mrs. Cook intensely shared. "Here 's my carpet; there, my lounge; the library, secretary, old arm-chair, — everything but the bed, and I am not sorry to miss that. My wardrobe, too, in the closet! But how did you happen to hit my fancy in the arrangement?"

"O," said his honest friend, "Aunt Rachel said that would be the trouble, — we should put nothing where you would want it; but Miss Crampton saw us, and she ran over, and said she had been in here while the room was being papered, and heard you speak about it. So she told us where things were to stand."

"And she arranged the books, did she not? I should not know they had been touched."

"No; she offered to help, but cousin Leevy took them down, and she said she would put them up again herself, as she knew just how they went."

"O, ho! 't was *she*, was it? Well, Miss Olivia has a bump of order. By the way, is she here?"

"No, sir; she helped me about the dinner to-day, and then

went over to Deacon Ely's. She said her aunt would want to come this afternoon, and she would stay and attend to the milking."

Mr. Vernon now recollected that he had left his wife alone among strangers. He was hastening to go down, when sister Harriet met him; and, putting a carpet hammer and tacks in his hand, bade him go to work in an adjoining chamber.

"But," said he, "don't be so authoritative. I must go and find Mary first."

"There is no need of that trouble. The child can take care of herself. She is as busy as a bee, and has set all those ladies at work, too;" — she did not add, as she might, "much against my will."

The fact was, this peculiar and energetic personage would have preferred to make no acquaintances in Salem till the house was furnished and ready to receive company. Then, she had no great estimate of the value of such kind of assistance. It sadly conflicted with the systematic order of proceedings arranged in her own brain. So, when Mary came to her, as she was unpacking beds and linen, and asked her to step out and be introduced to the company, and accept their offers of help, she replied in a whisper, that "this was no time for compliments; better tell the ladies there was nothing they could do: 't would hinder more than help!"

But Mary suggested that they would be better pleased to be allowed to do something, and she at length consented to go out and see them.

One woman remarked, "We are ready to help, if you will only set us to work." Miss Allison stood uneasily, and was silent. Another proposed, as there was nothing done in the parlors, to begin there, and spread the carpets, and put up the curtains. This brought Miss Allison out; and she told the ladies that "the parlors could be dispensed with for one day, but they must have a place to eat and sleep in. The most she hoped to do, this afternoon and evening, was to get the lodging-rooms

ready, and the dining-room so they could stay in it, and put up a stove, and get out dishes enough to use for supper and breakfast." Having been thus communicative, she hastened back to her task.

A bright fire was blazing on the kitchen hearth, over which hung a kettle of boiling water. Taking a hint from this, Mary told her new friends she thought the most difficult job, perhaps, was the unpacking and washing of the crate of crockery. If they chose to attempt it, she would begin there.

Mrs. Ely now arrived; and, seeing how the others were occupied, she set down her basket of provisions in the pantry, and offered her services with Mrs. Cook in the sleeping apartments, where she was so perfectly at home, in laying palliasse or mattress, shaking feather-bed or bolster, airing linen or blankets, that she won golden opinions from the very particular person who superintended these operations.

Meanwhile the young mistress of the parsonage, having tied a white muslin apron over her plain travelling dress, moved gracefully around, sustaining, with lady-like composure, the many searching side-glances she could not fail to see, — unfluttered by the whispers, accidentally overheard, that were not designed for her ear, — quietly guiding in the arrangement of china-closet and cupboard, — finding time for a pleasant word to the gentlemen. as they passed in and out with the furniture, — improving opportunities, in some by-passage, to put her arm round her dear father's neck, and press her lips to his cheek, and keeping up a constant, though mostly *mute*, correspondence with her husband, as he contrived not to lose sight of her for many minutes at a time, causing the color to heighten on her cheek, occasionally, by his manifest admiration.

By six o'clock the parsonage began to look inhabitable, and the ladies dispersed. Long before that time, Mary, with her quick, intuitive perception of character, had formed estimates of her new acquaintances. She felt, already, that there were some people in Salem whom she could trust and love. Her

heart warmed towards Mrs. Ely as to a mother. In Mrs. Crampton she saw a friend on whose wisdom and fidelity she might rely, — one who would make allowance for her youth, and be considerate of her in all circumstances. The frank, impulsive Bessie, she was previously prepared to love; and, as they moved side by side from kitchen to pantry, a telegraphic chain was soon established between them. When they parted at twilight, it was with a kiss and a warm pressure of the hand, while Edward smiled fondly on them both.

In Mrs. Lewis, who, to save appearances, called a few minutes, she saw more of the critic than the friend, and felt relieved when the cold, gray eyes, which scanned her so enviously, withdrew.

The lively Mrs. Coleman interested her, she hardly knew why; though she only called at the door to tell Mr. Vernon she was saving herself for a time when they would need her more. She expected to make great efforts, by-and-by, to keep his young wife from being moped to death in this dull place.

There were others, in regard to whom Mary only felt that they were well-meaning women, who thought highly of their minister.

Bessie Crampton had helped Mary set the tea-table; and, just after she left, there tripped up the steps a timid, beautiful girl, all smiles and blushes, whom Edward introduced as Carrie Wood. Mary spoke lovingly to her, and put her arm caressingly around the slight form to draw her in. But Carrie "could not stay; she had left mamma with one of her bad headaches, and must hasten back. Here was a jar of strawberry jam, with mother's love." Mary kissed her good evening, and she ran lightly back, saying, as she reached her mother's room, "I did not dare *look* at her much; but she has the most beautiful voice I ever heard, — just like music. I loved her as soon as she spoke." Dear Carrie! The love which she *inspired* was equally spontaneous and warm. Little did they imagine it would ere long be put in requisition so sadly.

Mr. Vernon and sister Harriet, it will be remembered, had a little difference of opinion on a certain point affecting the credit of his people. He resolved it should be settled before tea; in order to which, he led her to the pantry, and pointed triumphantly to the well-stored shelves. There were hams of bacon, and dried beef; balls of golden butter, and a fine cheese; before the window, a joint of roast meat, and a chicken pie, which bore the familiar stamp of the deacon's wife. Here was a row of mince pies, looking as much at home as if the pastry had been rolled on the very kneading-board that lay by their side. There were tins of cake and new biscuit, all unconscious of transportation; and a pan of milk, serenely forgetful of its agitated passage hither in a wooden bottle.

Miss Harriet took the surprise quite coolly, and proceeded to open her own basket of edibles, that Mrs. Ely, who was present, might not suppose they meant to throw themselves on the generosity of the parish.

How pleasant to the young minister was that first table-gathering in his own house, with its novel sense of independence and responsibility! With what grace did Mary preside, — her father seated at her right hand, with eyes that moistened whenever he looked at her! The good deacon's wife seemed not an interloper, but as one of the family; while Miss Allison looked the very genius of the occasion.

In the evening, Deacon Ely came for his wife, and made a pleasant call; in the course of which, he asked Mr. Vernon about his young horse, — whether he was getting much accustomed to the harness, — and at length said, abruptly,

"Well, Mr. Vernon, I have a proposal to make to you. You will want to ride about considerable this winter, and your colt is not very strong. You had better take one of my bays. I am about through with my fall work now, and can get along with one. When I want the span, I can send for him; but it will not be often. So, I will keep your colt, and the boys will

exercise him for you, if you 'll trust them. What do you think of the matter?"

"O, thank you, thank you!" said Mr. Vernon. "If I accept, I shall have the best of the bargain. It would be a nice arrangement."

"Another thing," said the good man, "if you will not think me inquisitive. What will you do for a vehicle?"

Mr. Vernon did not know. He had thought of purchasing, but concluded to wait till his horse had more power. The deacon was about to suggest a way, when Dr. Allison quietly informed him that he had ordered a carriage at the manufactory in Mayfield, which he should do himself the pleasure to present to his children.

As the worthy parishioners were departing, Mr. Vernon sent his best regards to Miss Leevy, and his thanks for her careful hand in the removal of his library; to which Mrs. Ely replied that Leevy would come over and help them, if she could be of any use. Miss Allison's face wore a demurrer, but it did not prevent the response, "Tell her to come; her needle will be quite in place here; besides, we want to see her;" and Mrs. Ely's last look was one of satisfaction.

"Edward, how could you?" said sister Harriet. The young man smiled; — he knew what he was about.

The cool evening gave a snug home air to the well-warmed and lighted dining-room. Another half-hour of social converse passed, and then this new Christian household was organized by the setting up of the family altar. The young master of the family entered upon his duties, as the priest of his own house, with sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. Toward this service all his religious thoughts and affections had been, through the day, converging. That first prayer as the head of his house how tender, how earnest, how full of unction and power! It well became the occasion and the man.

O, how blessed the dwelling-place that is devoutly consecrated to the God of all the families of the earth! Whatever uncer-

tainties hang, to human view, over its future history; whatever changes it may witness; whether predominates there the voice of health and gladness, or the wail of sorrow and pain; whether its larder be filled with plenty, or made lean by poverty; how oft soever its windows may be darkened by calamity and death, — one thing is sure. It is the abiding-place of the Most High; — the angel of the covenant is there, and, in the deepest night of grief, that dwelling has light, and hope, and peace.

CHAPTER IX.

"She, round thy sweet domestic bower,
The wreath of fadeless love will twine;
Watch for thy step at vesper hour,
And blend her holiest prayer with thine."

Let us look again into the old "Whitman place," now that it has fairly established its new name on the lips of the people, and is publicly known as "the Parsonage."

It is a wintry afternoon in December. In the little back-parlor, a bright wood-fire is crackling and glowing in the open "Franklin;" — for the forests about Salem were, in those days, unfelled, and fuel was cheap; hence, the luxury of an open fire might be indulged, even in a parsonage, without the charge of extravagance. In the centre of the room, on a piece of new drugget, stands the tea-table, ready spread for the evening meal. Between it and the fire, in a light cane-seat rocker, sits the young mistress of the dwelling, — her little work-stand at her side, and in her hand a paper-covered volume, which she has been for the last half hour, intently perusing, — not the latest novelette, but the October number of a well-known quarterly, the Spectator.

A small French clock on the mantel strikes the half hour

after five, and that sweet, thoughtful face is raised from the book to listen for a familiar step. Then the eyes return not to the open page, but fall musingly on the blazing fire-light; and presently, over that mental attitude of happy expectation, steals a dimness which makes the whole scene recede into a waking dream of six months ago, — a dream oft repeated, — of just such a twilight hour, in some quiet parsonage, waiting *his* return to a cheerful supper and a happy hearth. *That* seemed so life-like, so real; *this* so vague and dream-like. Which is the reality?

A gust of wind breaks the thread of these cogitations, and calls her to the window. She looks out toward the church and the village green. The snow has been falling very quietly all the afternoon, ever since Edward started on foot to visit a sick parishioner two miles distant. So still had the flaky shower come down, that she was surprised to see how it had accumulated. Around the old Academy a few boys were lingering, to finish a game at snow-ball; and, as the sudden gale rapidly increased, the whirling eddies of snow made her wish that Edward was safely housed out of reach of the storm.

"Ah, he has come!" She hears his step in the portico, and, before he can shake the snow from his umbrella, she is at the door to let him in. It is of no use for him to admonish her of the driving snow and the chilling wind; she will stand in the door and brush the feathery flakes from his hat and wrapper, till he forgets the discomfort of the walk in the pleasure of so joyous a greeting, — till there hangs, across her forehead and in her curls, a snowy wreath more becoming than her bridal pearls; and a richer glow mantles her cheek as she leads the way to the dear, cosey parlor, and adds another stick of maple to the glowing hearth. Gown and slippers are brought from the adjoining room; and now the tea comes in, and Mary listens to the particulars of the pastoral visit, and to the previous history of the afflicted family.

While the "tea things" are being removed, Edward goes to the barn to see the old bay horse disposed for the night.

When he returned, the table, with its rich, dark cover, was drawn nearer the fire; the astral burning brightly in the centre. On one side, Mary with her knitting, and by the other, an easy chair drawn up for him.

He had many questions to ask of her first afternoon alone, and she had much to answer.

She had written a letter home, which was left unsealed for him to add a line; and she watched his varying features while he read, now with a smile, some playful passage, and now, with graver mien, some expression of earnest desire to do good, or of inward perplexity in her new vocation, which, with her wonted freedom, she had confided to her only parent.

Then the miscellany — theological and literary — which she had been reading, came in for a share of attention. Some passages she had faintly marked with her pencil, that she might recall them for discussion with him. And this was not the first time he was surprised at the pertinence of her criticisms, and the vigor of her thoughts, on those abstruse themes on which he had been wont to read and meditate alone. She smiled as he said, with emphasis, "Two are better than one."

And now followed lighter discourse, as Mary's fancy took an excursion to her childhood's home, and she pictured the group around that other fireside, more familiar than her own. Very pleasantly passed the evening, till nine o'clock brought the hour of prayer.

"Truly," thought Edward, "this is better than my poor bachelor room at Mr. Cook's." An instant after, a whispering thought questioned, "Where are the *sermons* for the Sabbath just at hand?" — and a faint echo answered, "Where?"

Edward and Mary felt but just settled in their new abode. The three weeks since their entrance had flown rapidly by, though on heavy-laden wings.

Their house was in prime order, Miss Allison doing nothing "by halves." But it had troubled her greatly, that she could find no means to induct her young sister into the science of

house-keeping, especially that department which provided for the table. Time, in those days, was too precious to spend in *experimenting*. Then, she had so little confidence in Mary's capability; and, to increase the difficulty, "Thanksgiving," that notable state festival, was just at hand, demanding the highest culinary skill.

Very pleasant was it, truly, to have so experienced a manager at the domestic helm; and Edward insisted there was time enough hereafter for Mary's season of apprenticeship; and sister Harriet soon settled it, in her mind, that she never would learn, till left alone to depend on her own resources.

The family gathering at "the feast" was delightful. The doctor and William arrived the night before, and a joyous occasion they made of it.

Edward had but a day and a night to bestow on his sermon; but he did not labor in vain. He had, indeed, no nicely-spun logic in favor of "*conservatism*," or burning rhetoric in behalf of "*agitation*." He entered into no elaborate analysis of the great national compact, nor made an effort to solve the oft-mooted question, *whether a certain form of evil is sin "per se."* He broached no new philosophical theories, nor denounced the innovations of liberal thinkers in theology. Yet his discourse was by no means tame. His own heart was alive to the *divine goodness*. And when he named the passage, "All my springs are in thee," and, in the exuberance of his own joy and gratitude, led an excursion up many a stream which, for a twelve-month, had been flowing in with blessing, — tracing each by a different channel to the same fountain-head, — not an auditor was weary; and wherever devout affection burned, it was kindled to a brighter flame.

The good people of Salem were wont to "send portions to them for whom nothing was provided." Yet it was a new pleasure to have a *minister's family* on whom to shower their benefactions; and the gifts were neither few nor small.

It was a bountiful table around which the happy circle at the

parsonage discussed the excellence of the viands, and the generosity of the people, and the mercies, providential and spiritual, which made their cup to overflow.

There was some drawback to Mary's enjoyment, in the oft-recurring thought that she was to lose sister Harriet on the morrow. That worthy lady had a plan which she had not divulged. Many a time, the last few days, she had asked Mary, "What will you do, poor child, when I am gone?"—and though the reply was always a hopeful one, it did not seem to settle the question.

True, Mr. Vernon had offered, as a matter of course, to provide domestic help; but his young wife declined, till she should have put her own hand to the business, and thus become able to guide others in the affairs of her house. She would consent to hire a day's labor weekly; but beyond this she chose to put herself to the work, till she acquired skill by experience.

Sister Harriet had not been at the parsonage many days, before she was convinced that this plan was, at present, impracticable. The difficulty was, to get *time* to do all that was requisite, even in a family of only two members. There were so many calls, and so many invitations, and such projects hinted at, whose shadows were already visible, it was plain the new minister's wife was to be put thoroughly in requisition.

"If father is willing," thought the kind-hearted sister, "Ann shall come down when I leave, and stay awhile, till Mary gets through making acquaintances among the people." Father *was* willing, and so the secret was announced, much to the satisfaction of all parties.

The doctor could not be persuaded to prolong his visit another day. Two nights in succession was a longer absence than he often ventured; and he always had extra calls for a week after Thanksgiving.

And was not Mary very lonely after their departure? Edward had an exchange of pulpit services for the next

Sabbath, and so chose to consider himself quite at leisure. It was very pleasant to be alone with him. There was no painful solitude in the parsonage yet.

The following Tuesday called him to assist at an ordination, which would keep him from home over night. With Mary's consent, he asked Olivia Cook to stay with her during his absence.

Miss Leevy's growing familiarity at the parsonage surprised and puzzled the gossips of the parish. That she should feel so much at her ease there, was matter of surprise to herself. When she received the first message, through Mrs. Ely, she resolved, from a sense of duty, to go, expecting to have an awkward and embarrassed time of it. But not so was poor Leevy's night of penitence, and conflict, and noble resolve, to be rewarded. Her minister, if he knew her weakness, was too generous to seem aware of it, and too nice in his adaptation of himself to circumstances to fail in the present instance. Miss Olivia was received with such a mixture of cordiality and respect, both by himself and wife, as soothed her spirit, while it freed her from all constraint and embarrassment.

Instead of a day, she stayed a whole week, making herself very useful, even in the estimation of Miss Allison. She seemed to drop at once into a niche ready-made, which she felt might properly belong to her, and was quite agreeable. Admitted to the generous confidence of the family, and treated like a tried friend, she never gave them occasion for regret; while slanderous tongues were silenced, because they knew not what to say.

After those two days alone with Mary, Leevy told her aunt that people would find the minister's wife, though young, was not a *child*. She had a mind of her own; and, though unassuming, and willing to listen to the opinion of others, her own judgment seemed to be formed on almost everything connected with her relations to the people.

This long piece of road, which we went back to travel, brings us up again to the snowy day with which our chapter opens;

and the next day, as Mary prophesied, the fine sleighing brought an arrival from Mayfield. It was Dick and the delighted Ann, with a package of letters and of love, to say nothing of other packages quite substantial.

Now there will be some one in the kitchen, and we shall hear of the minister's wife out among the people.

CHAPTER X.

> "[She] knows
> Herself the mark of scrutinizing eyes,
> And curious observations. Apt remarks
> Are ventured, subtle questions asked, to prove
> And fathom [her] opinions."

"WHAT 's the use," said Aunt Deborah, "of having a minister's wife, if she will not go ahead in all kinds of benevolent effort?"

"Sure enough," thought Mrs. Pritchard; "and it is time we knew whether *our* pastor's wife is good for anything in this line. *I* will find out."

It was the middle of the morning, and Mary's hands were in her pastry, when she heard sleigh-bells at the gate, and, sending Ann to the door, hastily washed off the flour, and laid aside her kitchen apron, preparatory to a call.

Mrs. Pritchard swept into the back parlor, with a business-like air. (Mary had seen her before, and she was not a woman to be easily forgotten.) "She supposed Mrs. Vernon was not in the habit of receiving calls at this hour; but she had come in to have a little conversation on a matter of some importance. Things had got very much behindhand in Salem, since their former pastor was dismissed, six years ago. They had no ladies who were willing to take the lead, especially in the village. It was a long time since they had sustained a female prayer-meet-

ing in this neighborhood; but she *presumed* there was one *now*." [A pause.] Mary had "not heard of one."

"Indeed!" replied Mrs. P.; "I hoped you had started one before now;" and she proceeded to inform Mrs. Vernon that "she had resolved to see to the formation of a sewing society, and had come over to the village, this morning, for that purpose. She had called on several ladies, who seemed willing to have something done; and *she* meant to have it arranged before she went home."

Mrs. Vernon was ready to coöperate with others in any movement of the kind. She thought such an association pleasant and profitable.

Mrs. P. was "glad she approved the project. Indeed, she was sure she would; and she had ventured to make an appointment for to-morrow, at her own house. Would Mrs. Vernon draw up a 'constitution,' and bring over with her, that they might be ready to organize; and would she ask Mr. Vernon to come over to *tea?*" — with a manner that plainly said, "I shall not expect him *till* tea."

This interview ended, Mary's first impulse was to run up to the study and make report; but the thought of her half-made pies sent her in haste to the kitchen, where she found Ann, in the height of successful experiment, just taking them from the oven.

The girl was about as much of a novice as her mistress, in the nicer arts of the housewife. Though she had been under the tutelage of Miss Allison a twelve-month, she had been intrusted with no responsibility, — scarcely allowed a hand in compounding aught for the table.

Mary's house-keeping noviciate was, on the whole, a difficult one. Unaccustomed to this department of labor, — unused, as yet, to the habit of constant forethought, which makes the task comparatively easy to the initiated; with many watchful eyes, to note her failures, — there were times when she did most bitterly regret that her girlhood was passed in such freedom from

contact with domestic duties. Once and again she tried to make Edward acknowledge his mistake in hastening their marriage; but that gentleman was never sufficiently penetrating to perceive any mistake. He would only smile, and say, he "was satisfied," or, "she was doing nobly," or, "she would make the best housekeeper yet in the professional sisterhood."

Mary, indeed, resolved to be mistress of the science; and she did eventually attain her standard. But these initial lessons were attended with many a mortification, and a transient heart-ache, and some secret tears, — tears which were recalled, 'mid the trials of after years, with much the same feeling as the perplexed school-girl, in her teens, looks back to those she shed over her first broken doll.

Now, in addition to her home duties, she begins to realize that the parish look upon her as a sort of public functionary. It seems a mere matter of course that she should draw up a "constitution," and organize a sewing circle. She meditated the subject, half-mirthfully, half-gravely, till Edward came down to dinner, and, in the same mingled mood, laid it before him.

He did not doubt such an association might be made very useful; but he feared Mrs. Pritchard's zeal would soon cool. "As she did not succeed in choosing a wife for the minister, she resolves to know how he has succeeded himself. Well, you can help her form a 'sewing society,' if she desires it, Mary."

"O, yes!" was the reply; "but about the 'constitution'? How do I know what kind of organization would suit her?"

"Ah! if you did, you would be wiser than she is herself. You must make an outline, and let the ladies talk it over and fill it up, when you come together;" and Edward retired to his study, answering only with a laugh the question which followed him, "whether the document should have 'thirty-nine' articles."

Dressing quickly for the afternoon, Mary seated herself, with pen and paper, — in wielding the *pen* she was no novice, —

that she might dispose of the business she could not exactly see through.

She wrote the word "constitution," and "article first," and held her pen suspended a long time thereafter.

By-and-by there was a gentle knock at the study-door, which was as quietly answered; but the respondent only raised his eyes toward the intruder, — mischievous eyes those sometimes were, — and plied his pen as diligently as ever.

Very softly a cushioned footstool was pushed to the table-side, and from that low seat a pair of eyes looked pleadingly up, and a sheet of paper was lightly insinuated between that busy pen and the well-filled page upon the table. Who could resist so meek an appeal for aid?

"Well," said Edward; "you want a *name*, I suppose, the first thing; — 'This society shall be called,' &c."

"O, that is easily disposed of! I will just leave a blank for Mrs. Pritchard to fill."

"For your next 'article' you want a list of officers, with specifications relating to their choice. Then must follow a statement of the duties appertaining to each office. Another article must relate to the stated meetings of the society; and another still to the *object*."

"O," said Mary, roguishly, "*that* can be filled out beforehand! — 'to test the resources of the wife of our pastor.' But, seriously, Edward, what object do you suppose they will think of aiding? What will be best?"

"There will be enough, without me, to make suggestions on that point," was the reply. "Where money is to be appropriated, there are many advisers. There will doubtless be as many different 'objects' named as there will be dollars earned. I made some acquaintance with such industrial associations while I was in the seminary."

"Come; we must proceed with this precious document. I am so sorry to hinder you! and to-morrow, too, will be broken

up, first to take me over to this gathering, and then to come for me, which you must be sure and not do till tea-time."

Edward looked a shade more thoughtful. He had hoped to have the morrow in his study, without interruption. It was only for a moment. "There, my dear," said he, "the outline you have is enough to begin with; and, in the hands of the ladies, it will soon grow to a 'constitution.'"

It was with a palpitating heart that Mary responded to her husband's good-by, at Mrs. Pritchard's door, and turned toward the parlor. That worthy lady left her to enter alone, while she ran down the steps after Mr. Vernon, to say that she should have tea precisely at six.

There was quite a group of ladies already assembled in the large parlor; and a busy hum of voices, which, upon the entrance of the minister's wife, subsided into an awkward silence, broken by an occasional whisper.

Her quick glance around, as she bowed and spoke to those whom her eye met, soon noted the absence of some she had expected to see on this occasion. Neither Mrs. Ely, nor Miss Olivia, nor dear Bessie, was there. Could there be any design in this?

The course of proceeding was after the usual fashion of things in such a community. No one would propose anything, and the pauses were long and embarrassing.

Mrs. P. called on Mrs. Vernon for a "constitution;" and she took out the paper, with the remark that it was a mere plan, to be filled up by mutual consultation and agreement. When asked to read it, she replied that it was not yet in a readable shape, and passed it to Mrs. P., who declined taking it.

Mary then remarked that the first article referred to the *name* by which we would call our association; and added, smilingly, "Will not some of the ladies propose a name?" A pause ensued, till it became irksome, when a knot of women in one corner commenced a low-toned conversation between them-

selves, and a bevy of girls opposite began to whisper and giggle.

Mary appealed to Mrs. Pritchard for a name, but that lady referred the matter back to herself; and it was plain she did not intend to smooth the way for the young minister's wife, but rather enjoyed her rising embarrassment. She said, coolly, "We don't know much about such business matters here. Mrs. Vernon is probably familiar with them, and we wish she would arrange it. We shall all be willing to trust it to her;" and she exchanged glances with Mrs. Buel, who said, with her wonted nasal drawl, "Certainly, Mrs. Vernon is the fittest person to draw up the writings."

Mary's spirit began to be somewhat stirred, and to gather itself up for the emergency. Enough of this delay, — *something* should be done.

She proposed a name, and moved its adoption. Some thought less girls laughed; and all were silent but Mrs. P., who thought it *might do*, if there was nothing more appropriate.

Mary's quick thought hit upon a happy expedient. She said, it seemed difficult to get an expression of opinion. It might be well to presume that the ladies acquiesced in whatever was proposed, unless some one should offer objections. Thus, making silence the token of affirmation, she quietly suggested one thing after another, till the blanks she had left were nearly filled.

When she reached "the object" for which the society would labor, Mrs. P., with a little help from her echo, Mrs. B., objected to everything proposed. When urged to express her own preference, she declined to say more than that she would be pleased with something upon which all could unite She evidently thought she had reached another difficult place, which would test the wisdom of their leader. To her surprise, Mrs. Vernon waived the decision till a future meeting, that there might be more time for consideration and conference.

The rest was easily despatched, and, after some pleasant

remarks on the propriety of observing certain business forms, though it *did* seem rather an awkward thing for ladies to *vote*, the constitution was read, and actually adopted by a show of hands.

This damper to conversation being withdrawn, sociability increased, and the ways and means of raising money by the needle were somewhat freely discussed.

The afternoon was nearly spent, and Mary was just dismissing the vexation she had suffered, and beginning to feel less of a stranger, when Mrs. P. whispered to several ladies, and soon there was an ominous silence. The lady then proceeded to say she was pleased with the regulation requiring some religious exercise at these gatherings. She supposed the meetings would be opened or closed with prayer; and she looked inquiringly toward the minister's wife, who replied, "Yes, or with devotional singing."

"Well," said Mrs. P., "I should like to have a prayer *this* afternoon. As some of the ladies must leave immediately after tea, had n't you better close the meeting now with prayer, Mrs. Vernon? It 's half past five, already."

Mary felt that every eye was upon her; nor did the significant interchange of glances between Esther Ann Brooks and Miss Lewis escape her notice. One moment conscience whispered, "Ought you not?" — the next sensibility shrank, and said, "*I cannot.*" With more composure in her manner than in her feelings, she replied that Mr. Vernon would be in soon, and perhaps we had better wait for *him* to close for us. "That would be pleasant, of course," said Mrs. P., "if there would be time." Yet she made her request more urgent, and Mrs. Buel added her opinion somewhat decisively; and one or two others spoke of its getting late, and of having far to go. And again the young minister's wife said to herself, "What shall I do?" She felt that it was hard and ungenerous to press her so, and she plainly saw that the motive was merely a cold curiosity to hear her pray.

More words passed, till Mary felt her self-respect touched, and resolved to end the matter. She half-regretted that she had hesitated, *at first;* but *now*, indeed, she was in no fit mood for the service. A sense of injustice brought a sudden glow to her cheek, and a choking in her throat. At length, with gentle dignity, she said, "If the ladies wish it, Mrs. Pritchard, and *you* will lead the exercise, I have no objection to close the meeting now,"—"I! O, no!" interrupted that lady, —"if you refer it to *me*, I prefer to wait till Mr. Vernon comes, and call on *him*. He must be in soon. Do not delay your tea for him, if it is ready."

The amiable hostess vouchsafed no reply, but went quickly out to inspect her table. Gradually the hum of voices again filled the parlor; but there was one young heart that ached. Even through the entrance of the minister, and the supper, and the prayer, and the parting salutations, the rudely-swept chords of that sensitive heart continued to vibrate painfully. Edward needed no one to tell him that his young wife had been ungenerously treated, and her feelings pained.

As he put Mary into the sleigh, and their hostess stood in the door to smile and bow them away, he relieved his feelings by an energetic snap of the whip, that said to the "old bay," "Take us hence as fast as possible." When fairly on the road, and an arm was spared from the rein to be put protectingly around her, and lips near her face said, tenderly, "What is it, darling?" it was no wonder that Mary burst into tears.

O, child of sensibility! thou must patiently school thy heart to *many a harder lesson* ere thou finish thy earthly tuition, and win the prize.

CHAPTER XI.

"He is not the flower of courtesy."

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

One pleasant day, near the close of December, Mr. Vernon asked Mary to dispense with a regular dinner, take an early lunch, and be ready at twelve for a ride to West-woods. To Mary's query, whether the case were very urgent, he repeated a remark made to him the evening previous, at the prayer-meeting, by an inhabitant of that district: "I guess you are pretty choice of that young wife of yours. Folks our way are feeling a little slighted, — begin to think you don't mean to show her over our side."

"Why, Edward!" exclaimed she, "is Mr. Dennis such a coarse man? He looks quite differently in church."

"O, yes! he has been a very rough character, — a great talker, and a sort of acknowledged wit among his comrades. It is less than a year since he became interested in religious things, and what civilization he has is due to this source. There is a marked change in him; but he is still rude in manners and in speech. He is the only Christian man in that neighborhood. It is a hard place; but it forms part of my field, — of *our* field, rather, — and we must cultivate it."

Mary laughed, and said it was a curious idea this, of being *exhibited* round the parish. She feared she would contribute little by this visit to the cultivation of anything but curiosity.

"Ah!" was the response, "be not so faithless. I expect the people will behave much better than usual, because you are with me. The fact is, some of them *are* about half wild. You will enjoy the *ride*, at any rate."

And a romantic drive it was, after a distance of two miles from the village. The ground was bare and frozen, and the road was continually varying. Now, a broad strip of worthless common; anon, a narrow track, which would not admit two vehicles to pass each other; here, a smooth path of half a mile through a clean grove; onward, a rocky and precipitous ascent. After many windings and abrupt turnings, the road entered a dense forest, thick, it seemed, even in winter, with the trees stripped of foliage. Here were gigantic oaks, with limbs gnarled and bare; lofty maples, with a few scarlet leaves still clinging to their lower branches; elms, graceful despite the want of room, their giant trunks embraced by huge bald grape-vines in many a convolution; while here and there a towering pine, in its greenest robes, relieved and beautified the scene. An occasional opening in the forest revealed the gray mountain-ledge beyond, at the base of which were the group of dwellings which sheltered the inhabitants of West-woods.

Once and again did Mary exclaim, "How delightful this drive must be in summer!" and the vacant assent of him who sat by her side told that his mind was on another theme. He was thinking of the moral degradation of these secluded people. If his ministry reached and blessed them, it must be *carried to them.* They must be sought as wandering sheep on the mountains.

There were only nine families, and their pastor resolved to be impartial, and call at every house.

Those calls! They were at once painful and ludicrous, yet not unmixed with mutual profit.

The arrival of the carriage at the door of a dwelling generally brought all the inmates to the window. Sometimes half a dozen faces were thus exposed, when there would ensue a general scampering; and the minister, upon entering with his bride, would find some aged matron alone at her spinning-wheel, or a demure maiden, who only stayed because she could

not get away, quietly knitting, as if she had not spoken since morning.

A group of half-grown children followed them from house to house, by the back passages, jostling each other in the old kitchen entries, to get a peep at "the parson's wife" through the crevices of the shrunk ceiling, or of the door set ajar for that purpose. There was one pair of large, saucy eyes, with which Mary became in this way quite familiar.

Among these irreligious households were two aged women, infirm in body and shattered in mind, to whom the prayer of their young pastor, and his few simple words upon the love of Jesus and the heavenly rest, were as cold water to a thirsty soul. Occasionally, a child more tame than the rest was attracted to Mary's side by the offer of a gay picture-book, and charmed there by her gentle kindness. Shy as were most of these people, they all felt gratified at so early an introduction to the minister's wife, — especially when they heard, from her own lips, that she had not yet completed the tour of more than half the parish. *They* were not left till the last. O, human nature! thou wearest the same stamp in the lofty and the lowly.

When the pastor and his wife alighted at the door of Mr. Dennis, they were met with a boisterous welcome. Mary's hand was grasped as in a vise and the first words of salutation were, —

"So, you ain't afraid to come round among these outside barbarians! Wal, I guess they 're 'fraid enough of *you*, for there 's been such a skitin', and dodging, and racing, hereabouts, as if a flock of scared sheep was up, and running for life." Whereupon he laughed so loud, that Mary looked up to the low, cracked wall overhead, as though she feared it might feel the concussion. The jovial man saw the expression of her eye, and said, "Never fear, *Miss* Vernon; it won't come down, — it 's used to 't."

Mrs. Dennis, a sharp thin-visaged woman, now entered, with

tea-kettle in hand, which she held through the ceremony of introduction, and then proceeded to hang, in primitive fashion, on the great black trammel in the huge fire-place, over burning logs that would have fed a modern cook-stove many days. She then turned back, and, wiping her hands on her apron, told Mrs. Vernon she was ready to take her "things." Mary looked doubtfully toward her husband, and he was about to speak, when his garrulous host saved him the trouble.

"Stay to tea in such a place? To be sure you will; *he's* done it many a time, and he's alive yet."

Mr. Vernon smiled assent, and Mary laid off her bonnet, half-amused, half-vexed by the coarse volubility, which left not a pause unimproved. At length, the feeling of annoyance deepened to disgust: and she was thinking what a trial it was to have to do with such uncultivated people, when Mr. Dennis said abruptly —

"We are homely folks out here, Miss Vernon; but not so bad as we might be, nor as we have been either, for that matter, I hope. Miserable creaturs we were, — as he can tell you, — a frolickin', and drinkin', and swearing; but the Lord had mercy on us;" — and his voice took a subdued tone, and his face the same expression it wore every Sabbath, as he listened to the Gospel message.

Mary's feelings underwent a rapid change, and her interest deepened, as this reformed sinner went to his cupboard over the mantel, and took down a black bottle half filled with liquor.

"This," said he, "was my companion; but I have something better now;" and he drew from the side-pocket of his coarse jacket a much-soiled Testament, adding, — "You see, I had carried black Betty here so long, that I felt kind o' lonely without something, and so I clapped in this here Testament, and I've carried it ever since."

"A good exchange," said Mary, feelingly; "two very different companions."

"True," said he, "they're not much alike, — yet there's

spertt in 'em both; but different kinds o' sperit, I reckon. No offence, I hope, Mr. Vernon," seeing the minister look grave.

"You mean none, Mr. Dennis; but, to me, the comparison seemed hardly reverent."

"There it is, now," said he, "I have so long played the fool, and been in the habit of *turning* everything, that it 's come to be second natur."

He put the bottle on the shelf again, saying, with emphasis, "Not a drop of that cussed stuff has wet my lips since you and Deacon Ely stayed with me a year ago next week." Then turning to Mrs. Vernon, —

"If they had left me that night, I should ha' took to drinking for relief. The Lord had sent to my soul an arrow of truth, *headed at both ends*, and I couldn't get rid of it. I thought, if I only could have a drop from my bottle, I could bear up better under my distress; but *they* warned me against it; and *they didn't leave me* till I found peace in Jesus. The Lord reward 'em for it."

He looked up, and, seeing a moisture in those soft eyes before him, he added, "You ought to have been here in that are revival; 't was a blessed time."

This was a new scene to Mary. She glanced at Edward; there was an unusual light in his eye, which, somehow, brought to her mind that passage, — "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

All this while the taciturn wife of Mr. Dennis was passing back and forth from kitchen to pantry, preparing an early supper.

A clean, white cloth, of homespun linen, was spread on the rickety table; cups and plates, of coarse blue and white ware, placed around; dried beef, and cheese, and pickles, and apple-sauce, made their entrée at suitable intervals; then a plate of golden butter, and the sweet brown-bread, and boiled cakes so huge and uncouth as well to merit the name of "wonders;"

with a platter of "cold victuals," set on the most unnoticeable corner, — it being to the hearty farmer an indispensable appendage. The black earthern tea-pot was taken up from the embers and set upon the table; each one drew up a chair for himself, and Mary was seated at the homeliest tea-drinking in which she had ever participated. Mr. Dennis was highly gratified that she seemed to relish their plain fare, and quite delighted that she offered to help him eat his boiled beef and cold turnip. "A woman," he said, "that can eat cold victuals is worth somethin'."

After supper, the eccentric man took from his pocket an old tin tobacco-box, and, opening it in Mr. Vernon's face, said, with evident triumph, "There's that last quid, — stays there yet;" explaining to the lady, — who was thinking the display no way promotive of digestion, — "You see, miss, this good man of yours wanted to cure me of all my bad habits, and so he *at* me about chawing; asked if it didn't make me hanker after the bottle. I'd thought o' that myself. So, you see, I chopped right off. That's the very quid I had in my mouth; I clapped it in there, and it'll stay there, I reckon."

Was there nothing heroic in this denial of appetite, this battling with the hindrances to a life of godliness?

The carriage was at the door, when Mr. Vernon remarked the growing mildness of the weather, and said to Mr. Dennis, "You must have had a hard walk home last night — it was so cold and windy."

"Ay," said the converted man; "it was a stiff Nor'wester; but I didn't feel it, sir; we had such a good meeting, I walked home light as a feather. What you said about 'loving much where there's much forgiven,' and Deacon Ely's prayer, set me right up;" and Mary noticed that the back of his rough hand was drawn across eyes that had suddenly filled with emotion.

In a moment the melting mood was gone, and he said, "What cur'ous chap was that you changed with, last Sunday? With all his fine words, I couldn't make nothin' out by him

I 've lived all the week on what you gi'n us the Sunday afore; as the sailor, you know, lived a fortnight on the smell of a jack-knife that had cut pork."

Mary had now taken her seat in the carriage, and as Mr. Vernon was still on the ground, his out-spoken parishioner took occasion to tell him, in a confidential tone, — which she could have heard at three times the distance, — that he "was glad the minister had got so good a wife;" that she was "a real com-moj'um," and he "must fetch her out here agin."

Notwithstanding the sun was already behind the mountain, and the parsonage was four miles distant, the young pastor resolved to take the longer route, that led by "Roaring Brook," and introduce Mary to one more dwelling.

The evening was clear and moonlit; and they rode on silently, till each guessed the other's thought. It was of the future home of the righteous; where the many members of "the one body" shall be refined from all their earthly grossness and impurities; where the harmony shall be so perfect that the finest ear and most sensitive heart-strings shall be rudely jarred nevermore.

Thus, they brought to their hearts lessons of patience and gentle forbearance with what is repulsive in others, especially those who are under the hand of the great Polisher, and yet to shine as living stones in the spiritual temple on high.

When they crossed the dashing rivulet, and drew up before a low, brown cottage, Mary shrunk from another call. Her frequent alternations of feeling, for the last six hours, had wearied her; and the single remark of Edward, in reference to the dwelling before them, that "it contained the poorest family in his flock," made her anticipate a scene to which she felt inadequate.

Yet, Mr. Vernon did not look as if he were performing an unpleasant duty. Two or three bars were let down, and, stepping over, they were at the door. To Mary's surprise, he led her into a room so clean and cheerful, that she scarce noticed

immediately, how scantily it was furnished. A stinted fire was burning on the broken hearth; a bed in one corner, with a clean, but oft-patched counterpane, a single chair and stool, and an old chest, formed the only furniture, except the much-worn rocking-chair, in which was the venerable woman of nearly fourscore, totally blind; she, with her widowed daughter and grandchild, forming the family. On a rough shelf, under the south window, stood a monthly rose and geranium, carefully nurtured, tokens of the tastes and habits of more prosperous days.

The aged matron was alone when her visitors arrived. She knew her minister's step, and spoke his name before he crossed the threshold; she knew, also, that one was with him of lighter step than himself, and was prepared to welcome his young wife; so preternaturally quickened, upon the loss of one, are the remaining faculties.

Mary sat by her side, and held the wrinkled, wasted hand in hers, and listened with a full heart as this handmaid of the Lord spoke of his great goodness, — of his comforts which delighted her soul, and of that better land where is no darkness, no night. Neither did she omit to mention the kindness of her pastor in days gone by, and his consideration of her, in bringing his "dear young wife to this humble cottage." In all that she said, there was that peculiar refinement and delicacy of feeling which long years of intimate communion with heaven never fail to produce, be the outward allotment what it may.

She asked Mary several questions; and, being once reminded by her daughter that she had made that inquiry before, replied with great simplicity, "Perhaps I have; but she will excuse me. I do so love to hear her voice; it *reminds me of sunshine and the flowers;* and it helps me form an idea of her face, — a sweet face, I am sure."

It was good to talk with these afflicted disciples of Christ; precious to get a glimpse of the rich consolations which abounded in the midst of their deep poverty and many trials. Their faith in God and patience in tribulation refreshed the

beholder. As Edward said, on his way home, "When I get very low and desponding, and feel that I need preaching to, I come over and sit an hour with old Mrs. Harrison."

Mary went home soothed, though weary; and that night she dreamed of mighty forests and ancient ruins, and untamed heathen children; and, above the whole, let mid-way down from heaven, the New Jerusalem, where walked the just made perfect, in immortal youth.

CHAPTER XII.

"The letters were right long, and written fair
I merely take a sentence here and there,
When, as methinks, they did express it well."

A FREQUENT correspondence with her father was to Mary a source of great pleasure and profit. From a tender age, he had supplied to her the place of both parents, and encouraged her to a free and most beautiful confidence in himself as her repository and counsellor. Now that she had entered on a new sphere, it was quite natural that she should make him the sharer of her passing joys, and trials, and perplexities.

No circumstance of her life in Salem had as yet given her so much uneasiness, as the occurrence at the formation of the sewing society. She had made no progress, since, in Mrs. Pritchard's acquaintance; and occasional remarks, that came to her ears, made it evident that the thing had been used to her disadvantage. At a subsequent meeting, one good Christian woman had said to her, with much trembling, "I hope, Mrs. Vernon, if you are asked to pray this afternoon, you will not excuse yourself."

The matter pressed upon her conscience, and she waited anxiously for her father's judgment. He expressed much sympathy for her in her peculiar position, and added:

"It might have been best had you, at first, complied with the request. It is a service which, in these days, is expected of a minister's wife, and which she ought to be prepared to perform. Yet, there was great allowance to be made for your declinature; and, after the thing was pressed to the extent you speak of, I think your quiet adherence to your decision was justifiable and becoming. I fear you have laid the thing to heart more than was needful, though I would not impair that niceness of moral sense which I have helped you to cultivate. But do not distress yourself about it more. You will have constantly recurring opportunities to show that you do not shrink from duty, even at the expense of that unobtrusiveness which often renders a service, of the kind alluded to, more of a trial than most of *our* sex could imagine it to be.

"I am glad to hear of your little stated prayer-meeting. It was right, my daughter, *it was like yourself*, not to defer what you felt might be properly required of you. The Lord will bless you in this good beginning; and I trust the time is not distant, when these religious interviews with Christian sisters, at the mercy-seat, will be to you a sacred privilege, a source of consolation and strength.

"The 'report' about which you ask, ought not to have been mentioned to you. It is surely not worth the ink or paper it would require in the detail, to say nothing of a more precious commodity — time. As your sister's allusion to it has excited your curiosity, I will just say, succinctly, that our minister returned from consociational meeting, having seen at his stopping-place a woman from your church, who regaled him with large doses of Salem gossip. Among other things, she asked if Mr. Vernon's wife did not belong to the aristocracy of Mayfield! and said she did n't visit enough to suit the people, though there were *some* families whom she called on pretty often; but there were many people, of poor advantages, and some invalids, among whom she might, if disposed, do a great

deal of good. Mr. Baxter heard her, — you can imagine how, in his cool, quiet way, — till he thought it was enough; when, rising abruptly, he said, 'Why, my good woman, I married Miss Allison myself, — and I want to say to you that I married her to Mr. Edward Vernon, *not to the parish of Salem!*" The effect of this timely hint was such that Mr. Baxter, grave as he is, laughs outright when he recalls it.

"But do not trouble your little head too much about what rumor says of you. The world is full, not only of *wicked* men, but of *unreasonable* men and *women*, too.

"Ah! I am interrupted by a messenger from Mr. Smith's. His hired man has contrived to fall, and fracture his skull, — another achievement of King Alcohol. When you come, let Mr. Vernon bring his last temperance lecture, to preach in the evening. In haste, fondly,

"YOUR FATHER."

In Mary's next letter, she speaks of finding it needful to guard against a sense of loneliness, which would steal upon her at evening, as she sat alone in her quiet back-parlor, while Edward was sermon-making in the study. She proceeds:

"I have several times opened the piano for company; but the music is sure to bring him down. Then, there is so much lost time to be recovered somewhere, and it is generally taken from his sleeping hours. I am sorry the evening is his favorite season for study, — not so much on my own account; I fear it is not well for him. He frequently makes late hours, and the next day finds him pale and languid. Is it right? I am just getting my eyes open to the importance of regulating my household affairs and my own habits so as to guard against encroachments upon his time. For this reason, I do not get on, as fast as seems desirable, in my acquaintance with the people. Our population is scattered, and it is slow traversing the field. Whenever I go out, Edward must accompany me, and I think he is becoming somewhat disheartened about his pulpit preparations.

"I have one day's memorable experience, in pastoral visiting, which I must save to tell you at my next visit home. We called on ten families; which was doing a little too much. It took me several days to recover from the fatigue and excitement. As a set-off to the reports which have reached you, I must tell you of a compliment I received at one of the ten places above mentioned. The master of the house followed us to the carriage, and told Edward he was glad to find that his wife was 'a real commodium,' — I am not sure of the orthography, — an epithet which I confess myself at a loss to define, though I am very certain it was designed to be highly complimentary.

"Edward exchanged last Sabbath. Passing, on his way, the house of a distant parishioner, he was hailed by the inquiry, '*Going to swap to-day*, Mr. Vernon? Then I guess I 'll try to go up to meetin'.'

"The new preacher, Mr. C., is an odd genius, — a bachelor, in rather a low state of civilization. He managed his plate at table in a way that recalled that favorite observation of your colleague-doctor, 'I am fond of compounds.' At noon he lay down to rest, and left the marks of his boots on the white counterpane. He was not slow to declare his supreme indifference to females in general, though quite deferential to me in particular. If Mr. Baxter should entertain him over one Sabbath, I almost think he would reiterate, in earnest, what he so often says playfully, that there is need of a new professorship for theologues. But his preaching was the most eccentric, though not without talent. His morning discourse was on the subject of ghosts and witches; the other, on the natural attributes of the angels. One of these, he said, was *exceeding swiftness;* and his proof, — the angel who visited Daniel, who left heaven in the morning, and reached this planet at the time of the evening sacrifice. 'From heaven to earth in twelve hours! — and, recollect, it is two millions of miles from the *sun* hither. Amazing swiftness!'

"I thought, dear father, you would hardly call this a mathematical demonstration.

"I was giving Edward an account of the sermon, after his return, and he said I was rather a severe critic; it might do *his* sermons good to be picked to pieces in that way. After a while, he asked me seriously to criticize his preaching, and insisted that it was proper I should do it, and would be for his profit! What do you think, dear father?

"The twilight is fast deepening, and my fourth page is nearly filled. Do not my long letters weary you? My heart tells me, Nay. How sweet this privilege of writing to the absent! Sweeter still between us is the tie of prayer! Will you not, father, write me often; and pray still oftener for your child, who needs — O, how much! — larger supplies of heavenly wisdom and grace?

"The shadows are gathering fast. How typical of life! *Shadows* everywhere, — under the brightest sky. But no matter, if sunshine only prevail in the heart.

"Dutifully, MARY."

From Dr. Allison's reply to this letter, we extract the following sentiments on a subject of some importance:

. . . . . "What do I think of your criticizing your husband's pulpit performances? It is a point upon which much might be said. I should prefer to *talk* with you about it, and at some length. I may write unguardedly, or be interrupted before I finish. I should want to make some confessions, too, in view of my own practice, in years gone by. My children were trained to hear more strictures upon the pulpit than it was best to utter. It was a habit with me, acquired I hardly know how; but, I am sensible, not profiting much, spiritually. The style and logic of the preacher, his doctrine and its seasonableness, were, you well remember, topics of frequent discussion in the family, — so that I ought not to be surprised that *you* hear preaching critically. After a certain standard, your judgment of pulpit ministrations is pretty well formed. As you are a minister's wife, this may be of service to you.

You may call Edward's attention to some things which he might overlook. You can judge, better than he, how a thing will strike the hearer. A minister's wife should keep her eyes and ears open, and hear her husband as critically, at least, as she would another. Yet, there is need of caution, lest you carry the habit so far as to impair your comfort, if not your spiritual improvement, in hearing the word. My poor sister — your aunt Deborah — wore herself out early; and of her it was often said, she was more fatigued than her husband, after the labors of the Sabbath. He was not an easy preacher, and she heard him with a degree of sympathy and nervous solicitude that almost precluded enjoyment. On the other hand, here is our devout Mrs. Baxter, who sits at church, you know, so complacently, with her eyes half-closed, as if resigning herself to a safe current that was to float her to the haven. Good woman! she probably never entertained the idea that her husband could say or do anything that was not quite to the purpose; while, in regard to some unpleasant peculiarities, his people have said, a hundred times, 'It 's a wonder *his wife* does n't tell him.'

"Shunning either extreme, my daughter, as I believe your own good judgment will incline you, make yourself as useful to Edward as you may, freely discussing — if it suits him — whatever relates to his success as an ambassador of Christ." . .

CHAPTER XIII.

"Every pastor stands in need of encouragement, of cheerfulness, of peace, in his own home, to enable him to bear what life brings with it, and still to preserve the power of working for the benefit of mankind."

It is the evening of the New Year's Sabbath, and the clock in the little back-parlor of the Salem parsonage strikes the

hour of ten. Till that sound, no word has been spoken there for the last half-hour. Mary has been writing a letter home; and she supposed that Edward, in his easy-chair, with his hand over his eyes, was resting after the extra labors of the day.

The lateness of the hour reminded her of his last night's vigils, and she quickly laid aside her pen, with the exclamation, "I am keeping you up, Edward!"

To her surprise, he answered, in a voice that told of deep emotion, "I may as well be here, as on the pillow; I could n't sleep." Her tender and earnest inquiries into the cause of his distress, at length elicited the fact that he was deeply mortified by what he called "the utter failure of his New-Year's sermon."

It was in vain that Mary assured him "the discourse was *edifying*." He had meant it should be more than that; and it would have been, had his good beginning been carried through.

"But," said Mary, "you have had too much to do this week; — that wedding Thursday evening, and so many calls; then your lecture, and to-day two sermons, besides the 'communion' service, and your Bible-class this evening, — you ought to have omitted that; it has been too much."

"Too much! Yes, unless it were better," he replied, bitterly; "it 's all been a failure, from the lecture through, and I feel ashamed to look my people in the face again."

"O, Edward! you must not feel so; they know how you were hindered. Besides, they were really interested, — Deacon Ely I noticed particularly."

"Ah! so did I; and I thought, too, of what he said when he first spoke of my marriage." (Here his voice began to soften.) "Why did I want to allude to that? It is too bad."

"But you must tell me now," said the young wife.

"It vexed me at the time," he continued, "and perhaps it will you, although the deacon is such a favorite. His congratulations were cordial enough; but he followed them with the

'hope that this connection would not be the means of drawing off my heart from my great work, or diminishing the labor I was wont to bestow on my sermons.' It was the hardest thing he ever said to me. I suppose he will think, now, there was some occasion for it;" and again his head sank upon his hand.

"O!" said Mary, playfully, "he didn't know *me then;* he was quite excusable." After a few moments' silence, in which she inly resolved that the deacon's caution should not prove a prophecy, so far as she could help it, she asked Edward, tenderly, yet a little archly, what remedy he would administer to one of his people in such a state of mind as his own. "Would he not think the probe needful, to develop some such feeling as wounded pride? If you have done the best you could, in the circumstances, have you reason to distress yourself?"

"But," said he, "I have not done as well as I could. Did I not have an exchange, last Sabbath, on purpose to leave me time for extra effort? But it's of no use. I'll never exchange again, in such circumstances. It doesn't help me. I only presume on the time, and let it slip between my fingers. The fault is in myself, Mary, and not in circumstances."

This idea was not to be allowed, for a moment, by his fair apologist. "Was it not to be expected that the cares of a first season at house-keeping would somewhat derange his plans for study, and crowd upon his time?"

"Yes; but I have excused myself on that account long enough. I have hardly written a decent sermon in three months. I have been looking forward to more leisure. I should have buckled on the harness, and made up my mind that I was to work, for the future, amid a constant pressure of engagements. There *is* no easier time coming."

"Yet," said Mary, "your self-reproaches are not just. You ought to allow something for the transfer of yourself to a new routine of living. I am sure the path will be smoother by-and-by, when all things get settled and accommodated to each other." She did not ask if he looked back regretfully to his old-

bachelor state. Her faith had no such mistrust; yet there was something in her tone that touched a chord of tender feelings in the heart so full of bitter self-accusings.

"Ah!" said he, gently, "things have gone too smoothly Blest with such a home, I have given myself up to the enjoyment of the passing hours till severe study has seemed irksome. But I ought never to have distressed *you* with these wretched feelings. They are nothing new. I have been in such a mood before, and doubtless shall be again."

"And why should not I share in everything that afflicts you?" said this true wife; "especially when, if there is any fault, it is mine, as well as yours. I have not been sufficiently aware of the value of time to you. Hereafter we will have our whole domestic life arranged *with the study in the centre*, and I shall hope for great results."

Edward shook his head; and yet this cheerful courage was infectious, and he was soon talking calmly and hopefully of his plans and prospects.

Among other things, Mary suggested the idea of more system in his study-hours, — of taking, regularly, the earlier part of the day. She spoke of her minister as using the morning, invariably, and — unless the case was urgent — refusing to see any one before dinner.

Edward replied, "In a place like this, a minister cannot deny himself to his people. He must see them when they choose to call. Besides, I cannot study by rule. System is well for such men as Mr. Baxter; but I have my moods, and must take advantage of them. When the afflatus comes over me, I must write, even if the night overtake me. Without it, it 's not of much use for me to try. I might hold my pen a half-day in vain."

Mary was on the point of asking if this were not owing greatly to habit; but she checked the remark, lest it should lead him to new self-reproaches.

"There is one thing," continued he, half-soliloquizing; "I might decide upon my *subjects* earlier, and save the time I lose by vacillating in the choice of themes. My extempore discourse, too, might be studied first, and the 'brief' prepared. Then I might pursue my written theme with more freedom, to the last hour. I will try this; though I doubt, after all," said he, smiling, "whether I can be fettered by such rules."

"And now," said Mary, "what are you going to preach about next Sabbath?"

"Ah!" said he, quite gayly, "you are for a practical application of the rule, I see;" and notwithstanding she recalled the question, insisting that he was too weary to take another thought for the future till he had rest, he felt the impulse of their conference, and went to the study for his book of "Themes." But it contained only single topics, and he was resolved upon a "series."

Mary had heard her father say he wondered ministers did not make more use, in their preaching, of Scripture biography; and she mentioned this to Edward.

After a few moments' thought, he exclaimed, "That will be just to my purpose. It will give me a fine opportunity to say some things I could not well come at in any other way. I will write a biographical series. In the course of it, I shall take Balaam, and have a 'particular demonstrative' on the sin of covetousness. But who would have thought," he added, abruptly, "that I should ever have had such a talk as this with *you*, — that I should have admitted a witness to these heart-struggles? Many a time have I tossed feverishly all Sunday night, consumed with anguished thought; but you are a blessed comforter."

The fire had burned to ashes, on the hearth, and the lamp was dim; but the light of love burned brightly there, and the flame of gratitude kindled warm on one heart-altar. Truly, a man of Edward Vernon's temperament had great cause of

thankfulness, that the Lord had given him not only a wife of tender affections, but a woman of wise and understanding heart.

> "So, hope, and love, and gratitude,
> Dispelled that miserable mood
> Of darkness and of doubt."

CHAPTER XIV.

"It is true, there are shadows, as well as lights; clouds, as well as sunshine; thorns, as well as roses; but much *happiness*, after all."

Not long after the events of the last chapter, another letter, we find, was written from the parsonage to the dear Mayfield home. In it Mary writes:

"You may smile to hear me say that I am growing *miserly*, — miserly of *time*. Everything is planned with an eye on the fact that there are but six days in a week, from Sabbath to Sabbath. 'The great hebdominal wave' — as your favorite D.D. calls it, — punctual, inexorable, rolls in upon us, with its freight of Sabbath duties; and often it seems as if Edward had but just buffeted it, and taken breath, when in rolls its successor. The insufficiency of time for all that it seems desirable to do is a great drawback to the pleasures of ministerial life. To prepare two sermons so as to satisfy himself, is alone as much as Mr. Vernon ought to do in a short week; and, putting the sermons out of the account, the miscellaneous duties involved in the care of a family and parish, with the reading of periodicals, would of themselves fill up the week. The two together crowd and jostle, and keep him all the time overworked. I wonder if it is so with all 'the profession.' I suspect that he does more *pastoral* duty than most of his brethren.

"Beginning here, without a family, and finding himself soon

'mid the multiplied duties of a 'revival,' he has labored more from house to house, than ought to be expected of him hereafter. Yet, it is difficult now to do less, without causing dissatisfaction among the people. Deacon Ely tells him he must spare himself, and not heed any murmurs of discontent. You must see more yet, dear father, of this good deacon. He came in last evening, and, as he made no errand, after sitting awhile, I offered to call Mr. Vernon. 'No, no,' said he; 'let him study; I came to see *you*.' Was it not very kind in him? Edward has commenced a series of discourses, in which Deacon Ely is much interested. So, he sat and talked about the preaching, and had many things commendatory to say of his young minister, as he called him; some of which I took care to report to *that gentleman;* and it did him, — as your poor patient would say, — 'a *power* of good.'

. . . . . "When you write to New York, please thank brother Henry for his gift. I don't know what our people will say to such curtains of fine embroidered muslin. They are too beautiful for my parlor; but, as they are a gift, I shall venture to put them up.

"I am looking for brother William every day. Will you send by him those pieces of simple music in the library, with my old instruction-book? I have offered to teach Carrie Wood, and she is eager to begin. Her father has a notion that it would injure his patronage in the Academy, to send his own daughter away to school. I love the dear child like a younger sister.

"What a delightful thing it is, dear father, to feel that one's life is a joy and blessing to others! Such a feeling makes me very happy. Is not this a beautiful world? And life, though earnest, though laborious, may it not be made *very bright?*" . . . .

The new curtains certainly made some sensation in Salem; but Miss Leevy took it upon her to explain the matter. When it became generally known that they were a present from the

rich half-brother, everybody was satisfied, and rejoiced in the good fortune of the minister's wife. There *are* people in the world who would have felt all the worse for that.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages under which she entered the field, the young pastor's wife was gradually gaining ground in the confidence and affection of the people. True, the stream of her popularity was obstructed by many an eddy and counter-current; but it widened and deepened constantly, though almost imperceptibly.

Olivia Cook was a woman of so much character, and her presence in the parish so pervading, that her friendship for the minister's family was invaluable, in correcting those false impressions, begotten by lying rumor, in the minds of the ignorant and credulous. There was one thing worthy of mention in regard to Miss Leevy; she kept, as far as possible, the knowledge of this petty scandal from entering the parsonage. Indeed, Mary's ear was never open to things of this nature. She had no great curiosity to know what was said of her affairs. One instance, however, was so amusing, that Miss Olivia could not forbear reporting it to Mr. Vernon himself.

At a meeting of the sewing circle, Miss Lewis and Esther Ann Brooks were observed in secret conference, as on some "high thought intent." After a while, Esther Ann exchanged ominous whispers with other kindred spirits, from whom was heard an occasional ejaculation, — "You don't say so!" or "Do tell!" — with many stolen glances at Mrs. Vernon. The ball was rolling. Not many days passed, ere it was hinted aloud that, "some strange doings had been seen at the parsonage" A little more, and Mrs. Buel was heard to say, "she wondered what it was, about Mrs. Vernon. It could n't be she did not live happily with her husband. There was some mystery there. The person who had put her on the alert, said she was not at liberty to tell; but she 'should think Mr. Vernon would be ashamed of his wife.'" Another whisperer affirmed her purpose not to enter the parsonage through the kitchen

door; from which it was inferred, that the trouble had to do with the "domestic." And, above all others, came the remark of Mrs. Lewis, that, she "would n't have thought the minister's wife was such a *child*."

What could all this mean?

Miss Leevy took it upon herself to ferret out and hunt down the scandal; and, pursuing it to "the death," it was found to be simply this: — Mrs. Lewis' dressmaker went over to the parsonage to look at Mrs. Vernon's cloak. Passing in, through the kitchen to the back-parlor, she surprised the young wife *sitting on the carpet playing with a pet kitten.* Mirabile dictu!

For a more particular account of Mary's relations to the people, at this period of her history, we must refer to her own pen.

"Parsonage, Salem, Feb. —, 183–.

"My own dear Papa, —

"How I wish I might exchange pen and paper for a seat by your side, in the dear library, and a two-hours' talk, with my hand in yours, and my head on your arm, as in days gone by! I have so much to say, that the very thought of slipping it all off the point of my pen, is a weariness. But, I ought to be thankful for even this resort, and would not waste further words, if I only knew where to begin.

"I cannot tell you all my gratitude for your good, kind letters. The last was just what I needed; — the advice so considerate; the sympathy so precious. Even the commendation was timely. We are not always in a fit mood to receive the latter safely; yet, at that time, I was self-distrusting, and needed a little lifting up. And I feel a security in taking praise from your lips, dear father, that I never do from others.

"In your hint upon the wisdom of confiding everything to my husband, I understand all you would say; and my practice, I trust, accords with it. I have conferred with him on every point I have mentioned to you, and with much benefit. But then

dear father, he has not the advantage of your experience, or your position as *one of the people;* and, where I am concerned, he is, I fear, too lenient and partial.

"You will rejoice to know that I am getting somewhat into the affection and confidence of our people. I believe some of them, at first, were jealous of me, for Mr. Vernon's sake; at least, I give them credit for this feeling, and it makes me quite tolerant of their criticisms. One woman loves her minister so well she is afraid he has not so good a wife as he deserves. Another fears his house will not be kept with the nicest regard to his comfort. A third inspects his person, with careful eye, and thinks it 'too bad' if his linen is not as smooth and white as it used to be under the hand of a skilful laundress. A fourth shakes her head, as she sees us taking a ride or walk, and fears that, 'what with writing sermons, and doing parish duty, *and waiting so much upon his wife*, he 'll break down before long.' But, as it is all out of pure love to their minister, how can I complain? Some persons take the liberty to enlighten me on the subject of his preferences in regard to table fare; and so many favorite dishes have been named that I am led to believe he must have a most accommodating palate.

"There are some strictures passed, however, which have no reference to his comfort. When brother William was here, he and I took some nice sleigh-rides together, and I enjoyed it much. I was not aware of indulging an excess of spirits; but some young ladies were quite disturbed, and reported that I was very gay, and that, as I left the house, equipped for a ride, my laugh might be heard across the street. This reminds me of something else, of a very different nature, that troubles me.

"Did you ever think, dear papa, that I have an unusually quick perception of the ludicrous? I never met so much to call it out as since I have been a minister's wife. It really gives me trouble; — sometimes distresses me greatly.

"Last Sabbath Edward exchanged with Father Smith, a man who stoops very much, though not from age, and whose

nasal organ is very prominent. As he wished to go home, after the third service, he rode his horse over to the conference-room. He was moving slowly along, half bent, and I was walking, at a little distance, with that solemn-faced Mr. Fenton, when a pert young miss, before me, said to her companion, quite gravely, 'Mr. Smith's *nose* will get to meeting some time before *he* does.' I laughed, involuntarily, and looked toward Mr. F.; but his face did not relent in the least. The roguish girls, however, saw that my gravity was disturbed, and they took advantage of it to keep up their sport,—looking over their shoulder, occasionally, at me, then at the unconscious subject of their mirth, with deprecating glances at Mr. Fenton, who frowned upon them with his sourest visage. I don't know what he thought of *me*.

"I regretted this the more, as only a few days previously I lost my self-possession from a similar cause. It was before the weekly church prayer-meeting. Several persons had called, and, among others, a poor man, in failing health, who wished to ask assistance from his brethren. He had a subscription paper, drawn up by a friend of more literary pretensions than himself, which he handed to Mr. Vernon, with the request that he would present it to the church, and have it circulated after meeting. Edward read it, and passed it to me. I took it unsuspectingly, though I thought there was a curious twinkle in his eye. It was a singular document. I began to read, but coming to the statement that the applicant had 'always been a very disenabled-bodied man,' I could get no further. Rising, suddenly, to conceal my risibility, I met Edward's eye (was he not wicked?), and failed to recover my self-possession till I had attracted the notice of all present, except the poor man himself, who sat with an expression of complacent ruefulness, of itself quite ludicrous.

"Since I am upon this topic, I may as well tell you what happened at a wedding, not long ago, though you will think me a foolish child; and, indeed, I am.

"The bridegroom was from an adjoining town. His name was Hart. He had with him two sisters, a brother, and a cousin, of the same name. In offering the invocation, Edward prayed for a 'blessing on these hearts' [Harts], which struck me so ludicrously that I lost the rest of the prayer, in my remorseful feelings, at this intrusion upon the spirit of devotion. I cannot think of it without self-reproaches; neither can I without a smile. What shall I do?

"This letter was interrupted, last evening, by a call from Dr. Alden. He came, as he often does, to hear me play and sing; but I declined, this time, for fear of disturbing Mr. Vernon, who is very busy, this week, upon his sermon. He has taken quite an impulse in his studies, since New-Year's. The doctor alluded to it, in his facetious way. The congregation seems unusually attentive.

"It is time this long letter drew to a conclusion. Tell sister Harriet (with our best regards) we see no prospect of being able to relinquish Ann at present.

"What a cheerful rain we have had to-day; — not falling reluctantly, but in a succession of hearty showers. I have been just in the mood to sympathize with it. It has rained so easily, so spontaneously, so freely, — as if it could n't help it, and would not, if it could. I have watched the showers, and thought, 'like this should be *our charities*, given with the same spontaneity and gladness.'

"Edward has come from the study, and, looking over my shoulder, quite disconcerts me with the exclamation, 'Capital illustration that! See if I do not use it in my next missionary sermon.' What can I add, after this, except our united love?

"Affectionately and dutifully, MARY."

CHAPTER XV.

"They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest."

The winter months sped rapidly by, and the opening spring witnessed an unusual seriousness in the Sabbath audiences at Salem. Soon one and another inquiring soul sought the pastor's study, for religious counsel and sympathy. His words dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the dew.

The merciful visitation of the previous year had shaken the whole field, and gathered many souls into the garner of Christ. *This* was as the gleanings after harvest. The subjects were not numerous, but scattered, here and there, over the whole parish. Their treatment, too, required an unusual amount of time and skill. They were mostly persons who had been long thoughtful on the concerns of the soul, or who had, at a former period of awakening, voluntarily suppressed solicitude, and banished thought. *Frequent personal interviews* were the principal kind of labor needed; but some prominent individuals thought there should be *an extra sermon or two* a week, in such an interesting state of things. To meet both, made large demands upon the minister, especially as he had now his own domestic cares.

At the close of the first week, Mary knew he had not had twenty-four hours to bestow upon his pulpit preparation, and she asked him, anxiously, what he *could do* for the morrow. He replied, cheerfully, "he had no fear but what he could *preach to-morrow;* whether he could *sleep to-night* was doubtful."

In one of his temperament and endowments, *intellectual activity* was greatly quickened by *intense emotion.* His mind felt the kindling glow, and grew malleable and ductile in the superadded heat of the affections. Hence he was seldom

unequal to "the occasion," provided it touched his sensibilities. His zeal, unlike that which runs loose, without the judgment, *had too much to carry* to lose its balance, or make dangerous speed. It was according to knowledge.

The readiness with which he preached from brief notes, after so short a time in his study, surprised Mary. Not only was he fluent and fervent, but logical and close in reasoning. The fact was, — alas! that it is not always so, — he preached with a definite object in view; he knew what he was driving at, and aimed every blow at a given result. Illustration, argument, counsel, entreaty, all concentrated on the point he wished to gain. It was this, too, that gave such a freshness and charm to every neighborhood meeting for conference and prayer. The words of the pastor were no indefinite commendation of godliness, or vague exhortation to repentance and faith. They were chosen to meet *some specific want*. There was some objection to be silenced, some doubt solved, some difficulty to be removed, some impression deepened in the minds of particular inquirers for the way of life. There was nourishment of the right kind to be judiciously administered to new-born souls. There was stimulus needed for the faith and prayers of fellow-laborers.

Such a work will call out a pastor, and develop his resources. Mr. Vernon's people needed not this new demonstration of his power. They remembered the revival scenes of the previous twelve-month, and they *might* have remembered his consequent exhaustion. But these ministrations were so edifying there were few to think or suggest that the pastor could do too much.

The good deacon ("Was there only *one* deacon in Salem?" some may ask. Yes, there *was* another; but he was only a *left-hand cipher*) — the good deacon feared how it might be in the end, and did all that one man could do to restrain, advise, and aid. Giving up his own time to the work, he also took it upon him, though living a mile distant, to look a little after Mr. Vernon's secular cares, — sending "one of the boys," occa-

sionally, to saw his wood, and, often, to cut the hay, and prepare the mess for the horse, that he need not have this to do, after returning late from a distant meeting. No wonder Dr. Alden told Mr. Vernon, "Deacon Ely was the breath of his nostrils."

There are, in every parish, a multitude of miscellaneous services, which, unless there are self-sacrificing laymen, fall heavily on the minister, dividing his time, and consuming his strength. To spare his minister these, was the noble purpose of this excellent man. Hence he bore many burdens which should have been equalized among the brethren. He performed some disagreeable services which did not strictly belong to him. No one else would do them, and he determined they should not come upon the young pastor, who gave himself unsparingly to his proper work. "Why should the laborer in word and doctrine turn aside to serve tables; to be a door-keeper of the sanctuary; to warm, and light and ventilate, the room for evening prayer; to see that provision is made for the poor; to circulate subscription papers, and collect charities; to distribute missionary periodicals; to provide for the temperance agent and his horse; to notify church appointments, and do such like service, whose name is 'legion'? While *he* lived, he would stand as much as possible between a pastor and these." Thus reasoned Deacon Ely, and thus practised; but it was as a coadjutor in *religious* duties that his aid was invaluable.

Was there a case of open scandal or of alienation among brethren, — Mr. Vernon generally found that the deacon had gone before him, as a reprover or a peace-maker. Were there instances of neglect of covenant duty, — he needed no persuasion to look after the delinquents, and unite his influence with his pastor's in correcting the evil. Were there young disciples to be cared for, — he watched and cherished them, as a nurse her children, looking diligently, lest any should fail of the grace of God. One youthful invalid, when visited by the pastor, showed him a note she had received from Deacon Ely, in which, after

expressing his sympathy in her affliction, he gives her what he calls "the Christian paradox,"—"As chastened, and not killed; cast down, but not destroyed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things,"—requesting her to solve the riddle at her leisure, and send him the answer. The young minister's eyes glistened as he read the note, and he laid it down, saying, "That is just like Deacon Ely." He always felt that this co-worker with him in the gospel, had his eye upon the field, and would give him timely notice of any case that needed his special attention.

Many an impulse, too, in sermon-making, did Mr. Vernon get from this intelligent student of the Scriptures, as they compared their views of truth, and communed upon the topics of doctrine or practice, presented from the pulpit.

"I *never hear anything* from my sermons," said one minister, sorrowfully. Mr. Vernon felt the advantage of a free conference with a thinking, discriminating hearer, on the subject of his preaching.

This watchful friend saw, too, when he needed rest; and, as he took but little care of himself, he was thus *cared for*, and relaxation often urged upon him before he was quite aware of its importance.

During this precious season of spiritual refreshing, their hearts were more closely knit together. Very beautiful were their love and fellowship. One raw, chilly evening in the last of March, the deacon stopped at the parsonage gate, just as Mr. Vernon was leading Pompey from the stable, for a ride to the most remote district.

"Put up the colt, if you please," said he; "I want the privilege of leading the meeting to-night. You were very hoarse last evening, and this is n't the right sort of air to improve a cold."

"But," said the minister, "there are one or two persons, out there, I want particularly to see."

"I 'll take care of them," was the reply; "not as well as

you would, perhaps; but we want to save you a little longer." So Pompey was put back, rather reluctantly, into the stall; and Mary, who stood in the portico, and heard the whole, could not forbear saying, "O, Deacon Ely, how very kind and thoughtful you are! The Lord will reward you."

Those days of special religious interest were days long to be remembered by her, whose whole being was more and more identified with the pastor and his work. To the success and progress of that work, her heart became more tenderly alive. An increasing sense of her responsibility, in reference to the salvation of others, pervaded her prayers and her example. As yet, she had not summoned courage to speak to the irreligious directly on the subject of personal duty. Not that *courage* was exactly what she lacked; — she was so humble and self-distrusting, as to feel that it would be assuming, in her, to attempt such effort. Many a young person, as they entered to converse with their pastor, looked wishfully at her, as if hoping something from the sympathy visible in her face. Yet she could not utter a word. She spoke sadly of this to Edward, asking him what was duty; but he told her she must follow the impulses of her own heart, unconstrained; he could not prescribe what would be right for *her*. Even her dear pet and pupil, Carrie Wood, came day after day to her music lesson, with a deep shade over her bright, sunny face; and though Mary looked at her anxiously, till her own eyes filled with tears, her tongue seemed fettered when she would speak a word of Christian counsel. But this could not last.

One afternoon Carrie came as usual; but the first strain of music brought a gush of tears, and she silently took her bonnet and hurried back to her home across the street. Mary was greatly distressed. She prayed for grace to overcome her weakness; then, seizing her pen, wrote:

"Dear, dear Carrie! come back and tell me all. Come without delay."

Ann carried the note, and, ere five minutes elapsed, the

broken-hearted child was on the carpet, with her face buried in Mary's lap, sobbing as only a child can weep. Mary's arm was around her, and her tears dropped on the young girl's auburn hair.

But a calmer interval succeeded; and Carrie told how a feeling of ill-desert had pierced her heart these many days; and she could not talk with her father, as he did not question her; and she felt afraid to come to Mr. Vernon; and mama was suffering with a fit of nervous headache, and could not be troubled.

"O!" said Mary, "I have done very, very wrong not to ask you to open your heart to me before. Yet," she added, earnestly, "it is but little *I* can do for you. Jesus can help you, Carrie; he is willing, and waiting to receive you, — more willing than you are to go to him."

"O, no!" said the humbled child; "not *more* willing than *I*, if I could only find him. O, if I knew what to do!"

"What does he want of you, my child, but that you should give him your heart, and let *him* save you?"

"But *I* must *do* something myself."

"And what have you been trying to do? — to make yourself better?"

"Yes, I have tried and tried, and I only grow worse."

"This is not what he wants of you, child. You have been trying *to do his part of the work*. You feel that you are a great sinner, dear Carrie?"

"O, yes!"

"This grieves you, and you desire to be forgiven, and be made holy?"

"O, very much!"

"And you believe Jesus is able and willing to do this for you? Now, what have you to *do*, but to *trust him* for it? This is all you *can* do — it is enough. Trust him with your heart, just as it is, to make it what he would have it."

Carrie was silent.

"Since he has shown his love in dying for you, — since he offers to forgive you freely, — cannot you commit your heart to him, and confide in him to do all that is needful for its salvation?"

The young girl looked up with a beam of hope. "And may I trust him *now?* Will he love me *as I am?*"

"Certainly, my darling; every moment's delay grieves him But you must venture upon his promise and his grace with your whole heart. There must be no mistrust, no doubt, no reserve. He is able to save to the uttermost; he makes you the offer; he waits for you to accept it."

"O, how kind! I don't deserve this; but I will accept it. I *will* trust him. How can I help it, it seems so easy now? Why did I not see this before?"

Again the two wept together; but they were tears of delicious joy, intermingled with smiles. And then, kneeling together, with Carrie's hand in hers, Mary offered a simple, earnest prayer of consecration to Christ; magnifying the riches of his grace, and beseeching strength to lead a holy life. The scene was one a painter might have coveted. It had a holier use, joyed over by angels.

"Now," said Mary, "let us go to the study and see Mr. Vernon." But when they actually stood before him, she burst into tears, and could not speak. Carrie had to tell her own story, which she did with a self-possession that surprised him, while her face was radiant with the peace and hope of a believing spirit.

This incident was an eventful one to Mary. It lessened her timidity, and broke in upon her plea that she should do more harm than good, by attempting to direct inquiring souls. It stirred deeper in her heart the fountains of Christian feeling, and sent her to the praying circle with a soul raised above the fear of fellow-worms. It gave a new unction to her appeals in her Sabbath-school class; and, before the season closed, she had the joy of seeing many of them converted to God; a joy

deepened by the fact that more than one traced their special seriousness to her faithful application of Bible truth. O, what satisfaction is superior to that of winning souls to the ways of heavenly wisdom! "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A chosen vessel to bear my name among the Gentiles."

"My reward is with me to give to *every man* as his work shall be

April, with its suns and showers, apt emblem of life's changing day, brought to the Allison family the long-anticipated departure of the son and brother to his missionary work. Fain would the father, who was thus sparing from underneath him his chief earthly prop, — fain would the sister, whose heart had grown from infancy to him the only son of her lost mother, — gladly would all the household band have indulged their parting tears, and sighed their last adieus, unobserved, around the old hearth-stone. But the event about to separate them was in some sense a *public* one. William was to go forth as a servant of the Church, and the Church had for him her commission, and her parting counsels and prayers.

There was, moreover, another deeply-interested family circle, who were to welcome him into their group, only to extend the parting hand as he should bear away their best-beloved to an almost returnless distance.

"Surely," said the doctor, "it is not an occasion that leaves us to the luxury of secret grief!"

So he kept down his swelling heart, and went with Edward and Mary to the Eastern City, where many gathered to witness the young missionary's marriage and ordination, and leave-taking.

There was a murmur of disappointment in the gathered audi

ence, when, as the hour of service arrived, and the parties entered the church, it was whispered that the marriage ceremony had just been performed at the house of the bride. Her mother claimed this as her due, saying, very justly, "Though Emily has given herself to the cause of missions, and belongs in some sense to the Christian public, she is still our child, and we must have the marriage-altar erected at our own fireside."

There was, however, little need of this preliminary service, to add interest to the occasion. The "consecration," the "charge," the "fellowship," the parting counsels and benedictions, came from lips that seemed touched with a coal from the heavenly altar.

Some of the spectators watched with curious eye the changing expression of the youthful pair, while thus set apart to a sacred work. Others looked at them, and marvelled at the strength of that compassion for benighted souls, which could lead to the voluntary severance of the ties that bind to home and friends and native land. Others, still, — and among them more than one careworn country pastor's wife, — shed tears of sympathy, and in their humility took a low place before these devoted servants of Christ, who were forsaking all things for his kingdom's sake. To these, the young missionary might have responded, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." *He* had only given *himself* to the service of his Lord. What had he done more than *they?* *They* were toiling obscurely on, wearing out by trials locked up in their own bosoms; *he* was starting for the field, mid the sound of the trumpet and the loud acclaim of many a banded host of God's elect. A far-off field, truly; yet, for that reason, more conspicuous, where his prowess would be noted from the watch-towers of Zion, and heralded to a multitude of sympathizing hearts. But what need of this comparison? The record of all God's servants is on high, and their reward is sure.

We stop not over the embarkation scene. After the fare-

well hymn was sung, and the last adieus spoken, and the silent embrace taken, and the vision strained to catch the last faint outline of receding forms, and waving handkerchiefs, Dr. Allison folded his daughter to his heart, and Mary returned to her happy home with a feeling almost of self-reproach, at the thought of her privileged allotment. In blessed ignorance of the future, she wrote to her father:

"My heart covets for dear William a home like mine, in our own beautiful New England, mid the circle of our kindred; in a quiet village parsonage, with a church to be his co-workers in the gospel, and a christianized congregation looking up to him with esteem and affection; surrounded by all the nameless desirable influences that attend the ministration of the word in our well-ordered communities. True, we have some trials even here, but they seem to me light compared with his on missionary ground. It seems almost selfish in me to be so happy, when I think of his lot."

Ah, tender-hearted sister! thou foreseest not the time when his heart shall yearn toward thee, across the blue waters, with unspeakable pity, and a juster commiseration.

CHAPTER XVII.

"'T is over soon the cause, not soon
The sad effects pass by."

"No matter where the storm has driven,
A saving anchor lives in prayer."

The summer months found Mr. Vernon again in a state of physical prostration and mental depression. The early summer brought him a visit from his old chum, Frederick Morton, who was glad to take up his abode for two or three weeks at the parsonage, and pursue his acquaintance with our young friend, Bessie Crampton.

Morton's visit was not productive of good to his classmate. He was a man of fine social qualities, — a man of talent and ambition, — recently admitted to the bar. A professor of godliness, withal; but his piety, if genuine, had never gone, with its melting power, to the depths of his nature, firing and fusing the soul, and working an amalgamation conformable to that apostolic model, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, our Lord."

His friend's change of profession had always vexed him. Now that he saw his unwearied efforts for the prosperity of his people, — and saw, too, that these efforts were often at the expense of his own mental culture and finish of style and execution, — he vented his sentiments in a way that did more mischief than he imagined.

It was at the close of the Sabbath, when Edward was inwardly chafing with the thought that his sermon had fallen far below his design, that Morton said, abruptly:

"What a fool you are, Vernon, — pardon me, — to waste so much time in running after your people! You had a splendid sermon there, in conception, but you gave yourself no time to elaborate it. Why, my dear fellow, the materials you had in that discourse, wrought up as you are *capable* of doing it, would electrify the most cultivated audience in our land. You are doing everything for the people, and too little for yourself."

Edward's face flushed, and a bitter smile played on his lip. (Had not his own heart been saying the same thing, though it durst not frame it in words?) He made no reply, and Morton continued: "I see how it is. You lay down your book, or your pen, and start off to every sick child or whimpering woman that takes a fancy to see the minister. *I* would n't do it. I would cultivate myself for a higher field. The people here don't appreciate such a thinker and writer as you are."

Already, at the thought of the sick and tempted to whom he had the past week been a messenger of comfort and succor, Edward's bitter feelings gave place to gentler emotions, and

remorse smote his heart. He gave Morton a sad, earnest look, as if in doubt whether explanation were not labor lost on a man of so little Christian sensibility. Mary entered soon, and the topic was not pursued. Morton evaded it during the few days that remained of his visit. Perhaps he liked not to encounter another such glance of Vernon's eye; but his words had sunk deep in a sensitive nature, and they rankled there. Their author was little aware of the evil he had done, not by these bold words merely, but by the whole tone of his intercourse, during that fortnight's visit.

It was, he said, a delightful visit. He was charmed with the rural quiet of the place. He was charmed with the young mistress of the dwelling. He was in a mood to be pleased with everything; for he had obtained a promise from a frank, impulsive girl, which made him very happy. In this genial mood he wrote to one of the old college clique:

"You ask me to describe to you our class-mate's 'bright particular star.' You would have made as modest a request, had you asked me for a bottle of this delicious sunshine, as I watch it from my window, falling over the forest of endlessly varied green, and sparkling in the spray of the mill-dam! You must see Edward Vernon's wife, to get a portrait of her before your mind. But, to allay your curiosity, I will try my hand at description. I should say, she is sufficiently tall, and rather slight in figure; of a delicate conformation, or cast of mind and body; an ardent, susceptible nature, tempered with unusual gentleness; sterling sense, set off by a quiet humor, with some archness, and a nice regard for the feelings of others. Pshaw! how tame! I give it up. This kind of description, you know, is not my forte. The simplest rogue might run at large for all my posting.

"But Vernon is a lucky fellow. His Mary is just *the* Mary for him. She has a certain childish playfulness and grace mingled with sweet seriousness and womanly dignity. She captivates his fancy, and he reposes his whole soul on her affection and judgment.

"Lest you should think I covet this rare gem, I may as well inform you that there is in the same neighborhood a pair of darker, more brilliant eyes, — ay, laughing eyes they are, — with carnation lips and cheeks to match, which, *if they were mine*, I would not exchange for any I have seen; and which *may*, one day, who knows? '*Verbum sat.*'" . . .

It is needless to say that the Christian minister strove against the latent workings of worldly ambition. What renewed heart does not take the alarm at the approach of moral evil in a palpable shape? Yet his resistance was too weak and intermitted. He was in ill health, and in poorer spirits. Satan made the most of these facilities to harass and ensnare him. Morton had spoken of one and another of their class who bade fair to rise to eminence in the legal profession; and, as the tempted man thought thereon, the suggestion would come to his mind, "This is what was expected of *you*. Instead of this, you are only an ordinary parish minister, and dwindling even here." But the wickedness of the suggestion always distressed him more than the fact involved in it.

It required all Mary's philosophy and affection to keep sunshine in her heart and in her house; yet she succeeded, and was well repaid. It was a discipline of self-control and of compulsion to the only sure refuge and support, which she needed to learn early, and which was never forgotten.

In days of spiritual prosperity, Edward had asked Mary to lead their united devotions at the mercy-seat; but she had always declined. She felt no freedom for such a service with him. She thought it almost impracticable. But now, in these days of gloom, when he was troubled on every side, and the billows of temptation were surging over him; now, when he asked her, with child-like entreaty, if she could not pray, she assented willingly. But not *there* at his wonted place. She drew him instinctively to her own room, and bowed the knee with him at her own place of communion with Heaven. And such prayer he had seldom heard He rose humbled, rebuked,

comforted. It was as if an angel from heaven strengthened him.

The summer dragged wearily away. Those were sad days · and yet, in passing, they seemed not so dark to Mary, as when she looked back upon them in the sunlight of restored serenity and joy.

And what, meantime, became of the parish? The pastor had never deserted it. He attended the sick; he buried the dead; he wrote an occasional sermon; exchanged pulpits with his brethren; repeated, now and then, an old sermon, and extemporized new ones when he could not avoid it. The people petted him in his moods; inquired often and tenderly after him; said he had worked too hard; shook their heads ominously, and feared he would die young.

Deacon Ely thought *he* understood the case. "Was not this the natural reäction of over-exertion in one of so excitable a temperament and delicate constitution? The *spiritual* conflicts — were they not a part of God's gracious plan to deepen the foundations of piety, and prepare his servant, by a richer personal experience, for still more abundant success in his holy calling?" "Ah!" sighed the desponding man, "he judges more favorably of me than I deserve. If he could look into my heart, I fear he would not wish to hear me preach again."

In the midst of this season of darkness came sorrowful tidings from the home of his childhood. He was suddenly sent for to see his mother die. Mary could not accompany him; so, while hastening his departure, she despatched a messenger for Miss Olivia's company during his absence. Leevy was greatly shocked and alarmed. "O, uncle!" said she, "what will become of Mr. Vernon now? He had as much as he could bear before." "He will rise above it," said Deacon Ely; "the Lord knows how to deal with him;" and the deacon's philosophy was sound. One real calamity scatters a host of fancied sorrows to the wind. One heavy grief absorbs the sense of

many lighter sorrows. God stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind.

Mr. Vernon came home from his mother's grave an altered and a better man. His old despondency was displaced by a sweetly sad and tender filial regret. He had humbled himself under the hand of his chastening God. Earthly aspirations sank into their proper insignificance before the eternal weight of glory, the inheritance, upon which his sainted mother had entered. That glory and reward, lately seen so far off, seemed to approach nearer, in condescension to the weakness of his struggling faith. He strengthened his grasp on eternal realities, felt afresh the value of the soul, and laid himself anew at the foot of the Cross. In the soft flow of gentle tears, with which he met Mary on his return, was the promise of returning health and freshness to his soul.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." As this text was named, the next Sabbath morning, an unwonted stillness pervaded the full assembly. Sympathy with the preacher riveted the attention of many an indifferent hearer, while *his sympathy* with his theme carried the truth with power to the heart. O, ye, who expound the oracles of God! if you would make the word quick and powerful, bring it forth not only fresh from your own mental laboratory, but *glowing* from a *close contact* with *your own heart*. "I *believed*, and therefore have I spoken."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The promise is unto you and to your children."

"A silent awe is in my room, —
I tremble with delicious fear;
The future, with its light and gloom,
Time and eternity are here."

When autumn, in her gayest robes, once more dressed the earth, and the cricket's chirp began to break the stillness of the cool October evenings, there woke within the parsonage walls a new human life; and with it oped a new fount of love, pure and perennial, in two glad hearts.

Upon this infant daughter, Edward bestowed the name of his sainted mother and sister. The tiny babe lay in its nurse's arms, and opened its large blue eyes dreamily, all unconscious of the interest it excited, and the attention it received, as an integral part of the pastor's family, and thus, in a sense, the common property of the parish.

Many were the curious eyes that peered into the nursery to see the minister's baby. The little stranger could hardly take a long sleep, undisturbed; for every visitor that called, — who, by the way, was careful to say she should n't think it best for *many* to come in, but *she*, feeling *particularly* interested, could not delay, — every visitor must see the child in a good light, and with its eyes open, that there might be no doubt whether their color was blue or hazel, and that every feature might be properly examined, and resemblances traced and settled. What a pity that the baby face *would* develop so contrary to first judgments, — that, what was settled this week, must be reversed the next!

As the young mother pressed this new treasure to her bosom, it was not without a feeling of awe at the magnitude of the responsibility involved in the nurture of an immortal soul. She almost marvelled that so sacred a trust should be committed so generally to parents insensible of its solemnity and greatness. Once and again was this little one borne, on the arms of faith, to the throne of a covenant God, and acknowledged as a lent treasure to be improved for his glory. As the time drew near for its public dedication to him, Mary wrote feelingly to her father:

"It seems strange to me that I have been content to hold so vaguely the doctrine of 'infant baptism,' which occupies so prominent a place in our creed. Since I have looked at the ordinance, in relation to my own child, I feel that it must have a deeper meaning and minuter relations than my superficial views have ever grasped.

"I have conversed with several clergymen; but all their acumen seems to have been expended on the question of its obligation and validity, rather than on its inherent nature and efficacy. Even Edward confesses that his investigations have been more occupied with the divine appointment of the ordinance, and its propriety, than in studying the philosophy of its theory, or the law of its influence. I could get very satisfactory views of the subject from the Bible and my own Christian instincts; but, looking around on the families of the church, I am again thrown into perplexity.

"Do write me, dear father, soon, and freely. You, I am sure, must have thought deeply on the matter, and settled it to your own satisfaction."

In reply, Dr. Allison says:

"I do not know, my daughter, as it is best for me to say much to you on this topic, in respect to which I was once in a sea of trouble and mist. My views are somewhat peculiar, and your good husband may not think me exactly orthodox. It seems to me that a large proportion of believers in our connec-

tion, while retaining the form, have let slip the most precious and vital elements of its spirit.

"Your little one, whose animal life is so lately separated from your own, is still, in its spiritual life, a part of yourselves: it has yet no accountability, no individuality. Its soul is linked with yours. Why should it not be included with you in the fold of the good Shepherd? You are, under God, to mould and stamp it after your own renewed image. Hence, you put upon it the outward seal, — the washing of water, — to symbolize the fact of its expected transformation into the likeness of Christ, — its prospective regeneration by the Holy Ghost. You have a right to presume on its being a child of God, soon after it can discern between good and evil. This ordinance is to contribute to this result by your own faith, — not in any mystic virtue in *it*, but faith in God's plan to include in his covenant the children of his people. But let not your faith waver, or your purpose falter. As you bring your darling to its public consecration, let the language of your hearts, speaking in the ordinance, be, — 'This unconscious child is a part of ourselves; we purpose it shall be the Lord's; we will nurture it in a holy atmosphere, and trust the divine grace to bless our endeavors and renew it unto holiness, that it may grow up a child of God, in the family of Christ. Presuming on this result, we dare label it now as the Lord's; a partaker with us of the faith and promises of the Gospel.'

"And, remember, Mary, this step throws upon you the duty of watching the growth of the child's moral being, as you would daily watch *your own* heart and life; to secure, by God's help, penitence toward him, for its first voluntary acts of disobedience, trust in him for all needed mercy, and love to him for what he is, and what he bestows. To do this, requires more patient watchfulness, and a more careful ordering of their own temper and conduct, than many believing parents are willing to be troubled with. The consequence is, that the precious lambs of the flock, — instead of being tenderly nurtured under

the ample provisions of the covenant, — are let loose from the fold, to take their chance with others on the unsheltered common. There are exceptions, of course, to this fate; and among them, I trust, will be *our darling*. It is your privilege, my daughter, to lead her by your side in the paths of the good Shepherd.

"I little thought, when I began, of saying all this. There is another point, too, upon which I would like to talk with Mr. Vernon; that is, what relation has the church to the baptized children of her members, and what duties? Her general practice says, '*none*;' — but is it so? The Lord lead you into all truth, and multiply his blessings upon you twain, and upon your offspring."

It was in the spirit of such views of parental obligation, that little Abby Vernon was carried to the Lord's house, and baptized into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XIX.

"A rose nipp'd in the bud."

Of all who "affectioned" the blue-eyed baby of the parsonage none, beyond its kindred, loved it so tenderly, so devotedly, as the gentle Carrie Wood. She could sit, by the hour, and rock its cradle, or hold it in her arms, and watch its unfolding intellect and budding charms. Let no one smile, and call her a simple child; that is no mean study for older and wiser minds.

This dear girl was ardently beloved by her pastor and his wife. They, indeed, supplied to her, — what was ever wanting in her own home, — a quick appreciation of her deeper and subtler emotions, and friends upon whom she could lean without fear of being burdensome.

Her father was a man of the old Puritanic sort; inflexible in his pursuit of right, yet prompted therein more by a sense

of duty than a feeling of pleasure. He had taught the village Academy twenty years, where he ruled with a just, but rigid hand. Carrie was his only daughter; both she and her three young brothers loved their father truly; but it was love containing a large proportion of reverence and awe. The stern face relaxed indeed, — as whose could help? — under Carrie's bright smile, and softened in her winsome ways; but she never opened to him quite all her heart, lest he, so grave and wise, should pronounce her foolish.

The mother had been many years an invalid; a fond, indulgent mother, yet yielding step by step to that insidious tendency of protracted illness, absorbing and selfish interest in her own bodily infirmities.

Between the two parents, the beautiful girl grew up, as we find her at the age of fifteen, neither chilled by restraint, nor spoiled by indulgence. And at this critical period of her history began her acquaintance at the parsonage. There entered, now, a new element into the formative influences around her, under which her character rapidly developed in beauty and strength. This result was partly effected by the *unconscious* influence of the pastor and his wife, but more by their conscious aim, and pains-taking; yet, it was a labor that brought its own reward. The sensitive, shrinking girl, could not make a confidant of her father. In respect to the other parent, the order of nature was becoming gradually reversed; the mother was leaning upon the child. "Mama must not be worried," was her daily motto, till she acquired a habit of self-sacrifice, of yielding her own wishes, and submitting cheerfully to little disappointments and privations. If her mother's head would not bear the light, nor her mind solitude, Carrie was ready to resign her favorite book or needle-work, and sit by the hour in her darkened room. When an interval of comparative comfort allowed her the privilege, she would step across the street, and, by the side of her dear Mrs. Vernon, or at the loved piano regain her elasticity and freshness.

When Dr. Allison made his New-Year's visit at the parsonage, the young girl was present on his arrival. She had been suffering two or three weeks from a severe cold; but that afternoon she looked, to Mrs. Vernon's eye, quite well again. After she left, Mary said to her father:

"Is n't she beautiful?"

His reply startled her: "Beautiful! Ah! in our profession we see it often; it is a kind of beauty I cannot behold without pain."

"Why, father, your words and look alarm me; you can't mean — you don't think" —

"I have noticed it from the first, and told you she was fragile as a leaf. But now, indeed, it is too certain."

"But she is so blooming, to-day, and her eye so bright."

"Yes, — those are the tokens; it is the hectic flush."

"O, do not say so, dear father! Would not her friends perceive it? They do not seem alarmed; it cannot be."

"It makes me sad to grieve you, Mary; but you must, I fear, make up your mind to part with your dear Carrie. She *may* linger for many months; but I shall not be surprised if she leaves you before the flowers come again."

Mary's emotion was at its height, and she wept passionately. Her father soothed and reasoned her into a calmer mood.

Edward soon came in, and, learning the cause of her agitation, confessed that he had entertained the same fears their father expressed. "There was," he said, "something about her too ethereal for earth, and her growing maturity had of late surprised him."

Mary insisted that the family should be apprized of these fears. Mrs. Wood, she said, had no thought that Carrie had anything hard to do. The house-keeper was an efficient, thorough woman, and able, also, to do the common sewing. The nameless, numberless steps taken daily by the devoted girl in her ministry of love, the poor invalid scarcely considered a fatiguing exercise. Yet, between these, — in her mother's in-

creasing debility, — and her school studies, she had, for the last twelve-month, taken far less relaxation, in the open air, than her delicate constitution required.

When out of school, it was, "Carrie, dear, another pillow in my chair;" or, "my bottle from the shelf;" or, "move my foot-stool," or "dress my hair," or "prepare a lunch;" "run up stairs, darling, for this — into the kitchen for that;" and so on, twenty times a day. And the loving child stepped so quick, — her foot-fall was so light, her smile so cheerful, and her manner so easy, — that, although Mrs. Wood often said, "Carrie was a great comfort to her," she little realized how the slender frame was overtasked.

It would, as Mary said, have done no good to alarm the mother's fears. Mr. Vernon resolved to speak to Mr. Wood. But he deferred a day or two for a fitting opportunity, and soon there was no need of caution. Dr. Alden was seen to enter the house in haste; after a while, he stepped across to the parsonage, with a grave expression on his naturally humorous face Mary's thoughts, like a vigilant sentinel, gave the alarm, and her heart beat fast.

"Mrs. Vernon," said the eccentric doctor, "*do* go over there."

"Carrie? — Tell me," she said, hurriedly.

"Yes; — she has been bleeding profusely at the lungs. Stay, — you need n't run over without your bonnet; she is safe now, for the present. I want some sensible body, that 's not easily frightened out of their wits, to go in and sit two or three hours, and keep her quiet."

"And will she be well again, doctor?"

"Well? — *Never!* She 'll go down fast, poor child. No, not *poor;* she is half an angel now; it will not be hard *for her* to die. But the Lord help 'em there, when she 's gone! There 'll not be a streak of sunshine in the house."

Mary hurried over. Low moans from the mother's room

met her ear in the hall, as Mrs. Coleman opened the door to see who had come.

"Can I be of use, *there?*" asked Mrs. Vernon.

"No," said the lively little woman; "no, it's nothing *now*. The doctor has given her a heavy opiate, and she will be asleep soon. You would n't mind this, if you had seen the way she was taking on, when I first came in; it distressed Carrie so much."

"Is she above?" interrupted Mrs. Vernon, fearful of being detained to hear a long story. "I had better go to her."

"Yes, do. She is very quiet now; her father has just come down; but she fainted twice after I came."

Mary stayed not longer, but stepped softly up to Carrie's room. Standing at the door a moment, unobserved, she looked in upon the bed. The dear girl was very pale, and lay with her eyes closed. The house-keeper was watching beside her, and beckoned Mrs. Vernon to approach. She took a seat noiselessly, and strove to calm her feelings by a silent uplifting of her soul to God. Presently, Carrie opened her eyes, and met the tender gaze of her beloved friend with a sweet smile. She had been trying, in vain, to sleep. Mary sent the house-keeper below, and took her place. Then she kissed the pale cheek, and whispered precious words of consolation.

"My poor mother!" said the unselfish child.

"She is quiet now, dear Carrie. The Lord will comfort her; He doeth all things well. Let us take no thought for the morrow. He will order everything for us, and just as smoothly as is consistent with our best good. It is sweet to lie passive in his hand, and know no will but his."

One more smile, and the weary eyelids drooped, the thin, white hand nestled between the two that held it so protectingly, and the exhausted girl sunk into a gentle slumber.

Some minutes after, Mr. Wood looked in upon the scene. Carrie's sleep had brought a faint flush to her cheek, across which lay one golden curl and her parted lips wore a smile of

heavenly peace; while Mrs. Vernon still held her hand, and sat with closed eyes, through which the tears were slowly trickling, and a drooping posture, betokening the most tender grief. Stern man as he was, the scene touched his heart to its depths, and he turned away with a sharp pain at the thought of what he was about to lose, and a fervent blessing upon the young pastor's wife.

Dr. Alden's prediction, concerning his patient, was painfully verified. Her decline was rapid and unremitting. Her character shone with increasing lustre to the end, — her cheerful trust in the Redeemer, her patient endurance of suffering, her generous self-forgetfulness and care for others.

It was touching to see the rallying of maternal affection in the bosom of the wasted invalid. She "must do something for the dear child," and almost every day insisted on being carried to her chamber, though her want of self-control often made her presence more of a trial than a comfort.

A neighbor, one day, in the sick-room, expressed her sympathy for the afflicted mother. "O, yes!" said the considerate girl, "poor mama feels sadly; but her sorrow will not last long, — she will follow me soon. Dear father will suffer the most; he will keep his grief to himself, and have no comforter. I forget, — Jesus can find access to him, and *his* sympathy is worth more than all beside."

Mr. Vernon and his wife were untiring in their attendance upon the afflicted family. His counsels and prayers, always prized by Mrs. Wood, were now indispensable to her; while his presence had, for Carrie, a double charm. She loved him as a dear, valued friend; she confided in him as her spiritual guide and counsellor. Every moment that Mary could spare from her other engagements was devoted to her young friend. Though there were many others to sympathize, and watch, and help, none of them all could supply to Carrie the place of her dear Mrs. Vernon. No step in the sick-chamber was so light as hers; no voice so soft and nicely modulated to the sufferer's

sensitive ear; no hand could quite so delicately smooth the pillows, and administer the bitter potion, or refreshing draught; no lips speak so sweetly to her heart of the precious things that make a dying bed feel "soft as downy pillows are;" no heart so closely intertwined with hers in the bonds of natural and Christian sympathy.

March, with its chilling winds and funereal gloom, brought the final scene; a scene within, that contrasted — O, how brightly! — with the drear and desolate, without. If there was any one epithet that could express the whole, it was "*perfect peace.*" With sweet serenity Carrie's farewell words were all spoken. Even the wild grief of the stricken mother was hushed into subdued tears. The father, with bowed head, and arms folded on his breast, was stilling his rebellious heart beneath the righteous decree of a sovereign God, and trying to plant himself, with a firmer confidence, on the Rock of ages. The young brothers were awed into silence by the mysterious presence of death. It was early morning, and two neighbors, who had watched through the night, waited to see the end. Mr. and Mrs. Vernon had been hastily summoned. He had offered fervent prayer, and now stood at the bedside, his eye moist with chastened sorrow, and bright with the new beams of glory let in from the life and immortality beyond the vail. Mary held the hand of the dying girl in hers, and took the last cold parting kiss, and whispered a word of Jesus, and bent to catch the faint reply, "He is with me, — all is peace." None thought she would speak again; but presently, in broken whispers, she said, "Sing — Jesus — lover — of my — soul." Seeing Mary hesitate, as unequal to the task, she turned her eye expressively on her pastor, who caught her meaning, and began the hymn with low, soft melody. With her voice thus supported, Mary was able to go through, and the clear, sweet strains rose solemnly up, and mingled with the angel choir, whose music seemed now, rather than these earthly notes, to catch the spirit's sense; for Carrie, with her eyes turned heav-

enward, was no longer conscious of earthly things. A few quick gasps, and the pastor's voice broke the stillness: "Into thy hands, blessed Jesus, we commend this departing spirit." The mother had covered her face with her hands, that she might not see her child die; but, at these words, knowing that all was over, she gave a piercing shriek, and was borne senseless from the chamber. The others followed, leaving Mary alone with the dead. She embraced the lifeless form, still so dear; closed the eyes which had ever met hers with a look of fondness; composed the features, beautiful in their last sleep; and, dropping on her knees beside the bed, gave way to a passionate flood of tears.

Mr. Wood came back and found her thus. "Tears," said he, "are a blessed relief; but they are denied to me. My heart can ache, but my eyes are dry." She rose, and gave him her hand, but could not speak. He grasped it warmly, and said, as he noticed her pale face, "You have worn yourself out for us, and I want to thank you. *She* loved you with all her heart. I shall never forget your kindness. Mr. Vernon, too, has been very faithful. May Heaven reward you!" Ay, he may well keep this kindness in perpetual remembrance, suffering no breath of coldness to damp his grateful love toward those who so tenderly cherished his darling child.

And *will* he never forget it? O, human heart, strangely erratic and perverse! Time only can determine.

CHAPTER XX.

"And he said, 'Go look.' And he said, 'There is nothing.' 'Look again, seven times.' And he said, 'Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand.'"

"It was not an enemy that reproached me: then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me."

A YEAR and a half roll swiftly by, ere we take another look into the Salem parsonage. The baby has, by this time, grown to be a prattling child, with large, spiritual eyes, through which the soul gazes, as if looking from another and purer sphere upon this sin-stained earth. The mother is still young and fair, though with perceptibly lessened bloom. Her brow, still open and serene, wears an expression of deeper and more anxious thought. There is the same cheerful face, yet with a chastened look, as if tears had been there in April showers, and, despite the quick-returning sunshine, left their memorial. A close inspection of "the study" will satisfy us that the pastor is still the diligent scholar, and the vigorous writer, and the faithful preacher. On the table lies the half-written sermon for the coming Sabbath, the last paragraph bearing the marks of an agitated mind and tremulous hand; the pen has evidently been dropped in haste, and the writer is away. If we pursue the matter, we may find him in a corn-field, half a mile westward, in close and earnest conference with Deacon Ely.

It is noon, and the school-children are dispersing for dinner. In the door of the old Academy stand Esquire Lewis and Mr. Wood, as in grave consultation. What has thus drawn together the careless, loose-jointed, jovial squire, and the precise, orthodox, sober schoolmaster? A church meeting is to be held at four o'clock, at which two or three cases of dis-

cipline, some time pending, are to be issued. These things look a little ominous, though mere specks on the border of the horizon. Throughout the parish there is general quiet, — a growing attachment to the pastor's family, and unbounded confidence in the minister of their choice. Yet the last eighteen months have wrought some changes in the community, and brought a new inmate to the parsonage. A few historical facts will enable us to understand the position of things.

As the result, partly, of the last special work of grace, the public sentiment of the church was greatly improved, and the standard of Christian practice elevated. A class of youngerly men, who had become hopefully pious under Mr. Vernon's ministry, were fast becoming the bone and sinew of the church. Uniting with the most spiritual of its former members, they were soon strong enough to attempt the reform of certain abuses, long tolerated to the reproach of the Christian cause. Stimulated by the discriminating, pungent appeals of the pulpit, and led by their pastor, whose zeal was tempered by charity, and whose judgment was aided by the wise counsels of his aged deacon, they prosecuted the work with great prudence and energy, and much success.

But Satan does not take such blows as these without resistance. He would rather resign the chief seat in a den of iniquity, than be ousted from a very obscure and low place in the fold of Christ. He would rather have his synagogue whitewashed, than the church purified. But he could not do much to stay the work in Salem, unless he employed as agents other than his known adherents. If he can stir up some partially good men to hinder the progress of reform, he may laugh in his sleeve; and, unfortunately, such instruments are seldom wanting.

There are some loose disciples in every church, at present in good standing, who are afraid to have the reins of discipline drawn closely, lest *they* shall, ere long, feel the bit. There were a few such in Salem. Yet they could make but little

trouble, without some better men as coädjutors. One such they found in Esquire Lewis.

The 'squire, at the first, really liked his minister, and did not share the feelings of the family, even when it was found he was about to take a wife from abroad. He was not only too good-natured but too indolent to be any man's active foe; it was too much trouble for him to take care of a quarrel. But what man is proof against constant home influences? "The waters wear away the stones." By degrees he caught the atmosphere of his house, and his warm cordiality toward Mr. Vernon was gradually chilled. The daughters were still unmarried, and Mrs. Lewis could not forgive Mr. Vernon the disappointment of her ambitious hopes. She artfully incited her husband to oppose this new movement in the church, and from her lips he took his cue. His opposition was in the popular form of harangue; he talked against it here and there, till he was relied upon by the delinquents and their defenders as one of their party. His talk was on this wise: — "*He* liked to keep things straight, as well as anybody. The openly immoral, of course, should be cut off; but he was not for such extreme measures with all. We must not make a man an offender for a word. If we bear with them, they may come round yet. The difficulty with some of them is, they never have liked the minister, 'specially since he came out so strong on *temperance*. We have always had *peace* here. These measures are going to divide and break us up. We don't want the minister to drive a ploughshare through the church. Why can't he wink at some things for the sake of *peace?*" Such were the 'squire's views.

As the time approached for decisive action, he stepped over to ask Mr. Wood to be present, and help carry a motion for postponement.

But what hope was there of the coöperation of such a man in opposing the discipline of the church? With his regard for justice, his inflexible integrity, his strict orthodoxy, and exemplary practice, we should count upon him as a most reliable

man in a course of disciplinary measures. How came it to pass, then, that, while his conscience forbade him to oppose, he stood aloof and left his brethren to proceed without him? What has come over him that Esquire Lewis should presume to solicit his influence against that of his minister? Thereby hangs a tale, and, as it involves the very topic of Mr. Vernon's earnest conference with Deacon Ely, we may as well bring it forward.

After Carrie's death, Mrs. Wood declined rapidly, till three months of intense suffering released her to join the dear one whose loss she daily bemoaned. All this time the pastor and his wife continued their kind attentions. Mr. Wood could hardly have gone to his school from day to day, had he not felt that, in case of an emergency, the parsonage was close by, and the inmates ready, at the first call, to minister to his suffering wife. At her death a great change took place in his domestic establishment. His sister became the presiding genius of the place. She was much like her brother, — of strong mind and undoubted piety, — but unsocial in her temper, and with a certain independence of spirit that gave to her bearing a degree of austerity in the eye of a stranger. Mary felt that her presence threw a chill over the tender recollections and associations connected with that familiar dwelling. Still they were on friendly terms. Mr. Wood seemed to rely on his friends at the parsonage for social and religious converse. His afflictions did not so much melt his soul as elevate it to more lofty and earnest meditation on the great themes of immaterial existence, and heavenly employments, and the rewards of immortality. Mary often said of him, "He is a man of clear intellect and spiritual mind; — what a pity he has n't more *heart!*" Once, indeed, he did exhibit more. He was noticing little Abby with something of fondness, and her mother asked him if her hair did not remind him of Carrie's. He said he thought it darker. Whereupon, she took from a casket on the shelf a golden curl, that she kept as a sacred relic, and laid it across the forehead of the child, remarking, with a subdued voice, that it *was* a

shade lighter, but Abby's had the same wavy curl and softness Mr. Wood was taken by surprise, and quite unmanned; — he bowed his head, and two large tears rolled off his cheek. Mary said, afterward, she should feel more tenderly toward Mr. Wood, now she knew he had in his nature, somewhere, a fountain of tears. This incident, however, is nothing to our purpose *now*.

It is about three months since Mr. Rogers, pastor of an adjoining parish, rode over to brother Vernon's to tell his story of disappointment and perplexity. He was a man somewhat past the prime of life, with humble gifts, and had exercised his vocation in his present field, more than a dozen years, on a salary of four hundred and fifty dollars. Like his illustrious ancestor of the same name, he had a wife and nine children, with one at the breast. To meet their simplest wants, and rear them thus far on his stinted support, had, with his professional cares, silvered his locks and wrinkled his cheeks, and bowed his form, long before he reached his threescore years. His oldest daughter was just seventeen. We may not stop to relate all his shifts and turns in order to give Julia a good education. She was an apt scholar. If she could only have a book in one hand, she would learn, despite the usual incumbrance of a baby on the other arm. For the last year he had managed to send her to a drawing-master and music-teacher, as she had natural gifts in their line. He had looked forward to this season as the time when she would relieve his straitened income, by taking charge of the village school, and give his younger children, with others, better instruction than they had hitherto enjoyed. He had conferred with the district committee, and engaged the place; but, as the time drew near for the opening of the summer term, there was quite a tempest in the community. Some said, "They did not want Julia Rogers, with her new-fangled notions, to teach their children." Others that "It was real selfish in the minister to put his daughter in the school, and have her board at home, and take his pay for

her board, besides her wages, when there were poorer folks than he in the district." Some influential people uttered the vague objection that it "would make jealousies, and might lead to the dismission of the minister;" and so the talk went round, till he was glad to withdraw his claim, and stop the clamor. It had occurred to him, lately, that, notwithstanding the summer was so far advanced, there might be some small district in Salem without a teacher, and he had rode over. If he should get only sympathy, the ride would not be lost; for he felt very low. He had left Mrs. Rogers in tears (she was not up from her last confinement), and Julia trying to comfort her.

But sympathy was not all he was destined to receive. Mr. Vernon had often heard the want of a lady's school in the village lamented by his best families. The Academy was very good and thorough in its way; but other advantages were needed for girls in their teens. He was confident that, with a little effort, a small private school might be started; the income would be something, and Julia should be welcome for the present to a home in his own family; — an offer which Mary's kind heart had already anticipated.

"But," said she, "what will Mr. *Wood* say to the school? Mrs. Crampton told me that they had tried several times for one, but he was so opposed they had to give it up."

"If *I* undertake it," was the reply, "I think it will succeed, if he does oppose it." (Ah, Edward! with that curl of the lip, take care, or you will get into trouble.) "But he is a reasonable man, and I can convince him that the public good requires such a school. I will step out around the village, and see how many names I can get."

Mary followed him to the door to say, "It is nearly time for the Academy to be out; had you not better talk with Mr Wood *first?*"

"No, my dear," said he, with smiling decision, "I shall not think it necessary to say to him, 'By your leave, sir.'"

The result was more successful than was expected; — twelve

pupils were subscribed, five of whom were attending the Academy; a room was obtained, and the day appointed for the opening of the term. Poor Mr. Rogers went home with a light heart.

It was Mr. Vernon's purpose to call on Mr. Wood, the next day, and state the case; but he took it quite too leisurely; the day slipped by, and company in the evening occupied him. The day following he went over early, but it was Saturday, and a holiday; the house was locked, and the family gone to the city. Before their return the minister was obliged to leave home, on an exchange of Sabbath services; so that Monday morning came, and with it Miss Rogers, to commence her school, while as yet the active agent in the new movement had not conferred with the old instructor. But the latter was not the while unconscious of what had transpired. Rumor is many-mouthed and fleet of foot. What marvel that Mr. Wood was first grieved and then indignant? What marvel that he saw in the little school a future formidable rival? Aware of the infirmity of human nature, might we not have anticipated his cool, stern reception of the minister, when, at last, he called to offer explanation? It was useless, now, to reason with him upon the need of such advantages as the Academy did not furnish. It was vain to persuade him that this humble enterprise would walk meekly on, in the shadow of *his*, well-established and of good repute. It was hopeless to touch his sympathies with the story of the young girl's disappointment and destitution. All this might possibly have been effected days ago; but now the immutable Mr. Wood had settled it in his mind that some of his patrons were disaffected, and had formed a conspiracy against him, and that the minister was lending himself to their designs. "If there were no underhand plotting, — if Mr. Vernon were self-moved in the matter, — what more natural than that he should come to me first, and consult my feelings?" Mr. Vernon rehearsed the circumstances; but the statement only met a cherished resentment that was not to

be mollified. His expression of regret, that he did not seek an earlier interview, was of no avail, since it did not confess an actual wrong, and offer reparation. Mr. Wood, in his supremacy, felt that he was the guardian and representative of the educational interests of the village; and that no one, not even the minister, had a right to do aught in this department without his knowledge and consent. To this high assumption, Mr. Vernon was not disposed to yield. It was, doubtless, proper that, in this case, Mr. Wood should have been early advised of proceedings. It would have been polite, as well as just, to consult him first; but the independent spirit of the pastor only half-admitted this to himself. In the face of Mr. Wood's overbearing demeanor and unjust accusations, his feelings were wounded, and he was in no mood for a humble apology; and so the painful interview ended; — the schoolmaster went his way to cherish alienation and bitterness; the pastor went to his study with a weight upon his spirit. Yet the white slab over Carrie's grave was plainly visible from both dwellings, and her memory had not grown cold in either heart.

To Mary, this alienation was a source of exquisite grief, adding a new and bitter element to the recollections hitherto fraught with sweetly sad and gentle emotions. When Deacon Ely reported at the parsonage, as the result of his interview with the offended brother, the emphatic declaration, — "He has injured me; and though I shall never oppose him, I must and shall *let him alone*," — Mary could not forbear exclaiming, "What an iron-hearted man!" and sighing to herself, Poor, dear Carrie!"

It was shortly after this that the church commenced its disciplinary measures, from which Mr. Wood kept aloof, much to the grief of his good brethren, and the inward joy of the workers of iniquity. Several cases had been issued, with almost entire unanimity; but the two last elicited warm opposition. The situation of affairs perplexed and distressed the young pastor. As the crisis drew near, he found it difficult to concen-

trate his thoughts upon his sermon; so he dropped the pen, as we have seen, and sought the counsel of his worthy deacon.

Deacon Ely agreed with him that his difficulty with Mr. Wood was most unfortunate for the cause of truth, and suggested that another effort be made for reconciliation.

Mr. Vernon was willing, but not very hopeful.

"How much," said the deacon, "are you willing to concede?"

The minister replied, "that he had already acknowledged that he was inconsiderate and faulty in not opening the matter sooner to Mr. Wood."

"And had he not some claim to be consulted first?"

Mr. V. thought he might have had, but for the fact of his opposition to previous efforts of the kind.

"Well, now," continued the peace-maker, "can you not say that you regret having taken a step to open another school till you had first laid the matter before him, and learned his views?"

"What! when my regrets would be only for prudential reasons? That would be worse than useless. No; if I say anything, I must go to the bottom; and you may judge whether it would be very conciliatory. I should have to say to him, 'I did not come to you at first, because I knew you to be an impracticable man, resolutely set on your own ends. *I*, too, have some independence and determination. I had set my heart on the measure, and meant to carry it. I believed it to be for the public good, and no loss to you in the end. I presumed on our good understanding to prevent any serious disaffection. After the thing had assumed shape, I ought to have communicated with you at once, and would renew my apology for this neglect.'"

The deacon smiled, and said it was always best to be honest and outspoken; and he was not certain that these very words, uttered frankly to Mr. Wood, might not be the basis of restored

harmony. "At any rate, we can try, if you are willing, after meeting."

The church meeting passed off more peacefully than was anticipated. Esquire Lewis did not get the coöperation he sought. There had been much prayer and self-searching in the closet. The majority came together with a tender solemnity of spirit, that awed the opposition to silence. The power of Christ was present, administering the discipline of his house in firmness and love.

It was evening when Deacon Ely asked Mr. Wood to go over to the minister's study, and have an interview.

"It is of no use," said the inflexible man. The deacon argued, but to no purpose. He offered to bring Mr. Vernon there, but he was resolute; — he did not wish the matter agitated further; adding, resolutely, "I have always been friendly to Mr. Vernon, and done what I could to sustain him, till he set up the school in the way he did; *then I dropped him.*"

Alas! how many are the pastors who, for causes slight as this, are made to realize the force of the proverb, "A *brother* offended is harder to be won than a strong city"!

Edward Vernon was a man of too exquisite sensibility not to be deeply wounded by this non-intercourse act. Said he to Deacon Ely, "How can I live here, with this estrangement; reminded as I am of our former intimacy, with all its tender associations, every time I look across the street? I do not think I shall bear it long."

"O, sir," was the reply, "you must not dwell upon it. It will wear away. I hope you will not think of quitting the field for one man. Hold on patiently, and all will come out well. I have hope of Mr. Wood yet, though he seems made of sterner stuff than other men. He is, I trust, sound at heart, and cannot hold his displeasure forever."

That night the deacon told his wife and Leevy that he trembled lest they should be called, ere long, to part with their minister. There were parishes enough to call him, if it should

be known that he was uneasy here. "I don't know," said he, "but I have thought too much of the instrument, and too little of the power that wields it. I have certainly leaned more on this young man than on any other human helper. I fear the Lord is about to chasten me sorely, by his removal."

A few weeks more pass, and it begins to be rumored abroad that the Salem minister is ill at ease, — that the sky is not exactly clear over his head. A deputation from a distant church pass a Sabbath under his preaching, and call to confer with him about a transfer to their young and thriving manufacturing village. He tries his own heart, by an imagined leave-taking, and finds that many and strong are the cords that hold him to his people; and the first to feel is the tie between him and his father in the Lord, the beloved deacon. There are, indeed, some strong motives urging to a serious consideration of the proposal. The change will introduce him to a larger sphere of usefulness, and put his talents more thoroughly in requisition for his Master's cause. Underneath this plausible plea, did there lurk an unslain head of the old hydra, ambition? Who shall put his finger on the pulsations of that unknowable thing, the deceitful heart, and say, *this throb* is from pure love to God and man; *that beat* from desire of self-aggrandizement; here is an exultation at the power to move and mould others, prompted by disinterested love; there is the same joy springing from the mere love of conscious skill and power? Be this as it may, Mr. Vernon discouraged the application; yet scarcely was the thing done ere it was half-repented of. And now He who seeth all hearts tried his servant further, by a mysterious dispensation. *Deacon Ely was suddenly called to his rest.* Bitter, indeed, was this cup to many a lip. The young pastor, heart-stricken, took up the lamentation of Elisha, "My father! my father! the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" His *almost* rebellious heart asked not calmly for the lesson God was teaching him, — waited not for the still small voice, after the cloud and storm had passed over. True,

it said, "Thy will be done;" but with the next breath, "Now, indeed, I cannot stay in Salem." In less than a month from this sad event, much to the general surprise and grief of his people, he received and accepted a call to Millville.

CHAPTER XXI.

"O love! thou hast a noble throne,
In bosoms where thy life-light falls;
So warm and wide that they have sighed
At leaving even household walls."

A GARDENER, wishing to construct a new trellis for a favorite vine, took the opportunity after fruit-gathering to disengage it from the old frame, and substitute the new. But the work, he found, required more time and patience than he had provided for; — the branches more closely interlaced the paling, the tendrils clung with a more tenacious grasp, and the points of contact, which had looked so few, seemed numberless. When, at length, the work was completed, many a leaf was lying on the ground, many a tendril torn and drooping, and here and there a branch broken.

So, often, in the disruption of our social ties, the actual experience overruns our calculation. This point had often been revolved at the Salem parsonage: "Would it be hard to leave, and seek a new home among strangers?" At such times, Mary was wont to say, "The trial will be greater for you, Edward, than for me. The people have never loved me as they do you. Entering first, you had the advantage If we go to a new place, we shall start fair." In a hasty letter to sister Harriet, written amid the preparations for departure, she says:

"I find myself very strongly attached to this people; and I believe many of them are to me. My Sabbath-school class is

very precious; the praying circle too. It will take me long to feel at home in another. Many families have shown us only kindnesses, and those not a few, — Mrs. Coleman, Mrs. Crampton, and Mrs. Cook. O! what do you think of aunt Rachel? — she wants to go too, live with us, and make us her heirs. The Lewises have always treated me coolly, and Mrs. Pritchard never liked me. She is a woman of many good qualities, and a natural ally of a minister's wife. I did not take the right course with her. I see, now, that I might have conciliated her regard. I am sorry to leave our new friend, sweet Julia Rogers. Little Abby will miss her sadly. The circle of young men, too, have been very polite to me. They love Edward very much, and it is whispered that they are designing to make us a parting gift. The thought of it makes my eyes overflow. I hope it will not affect Edward as did a little occurrence on his return from Millville. No one here knew the cause of his absence. He had been away several times before, — to see his father twice. Mr. Cook saluted him, and, putting a five-dollar note in his hand, said, 'There 's a little to help pay your travelling expenses. It costs something to journey about, as you have done lately, and you must have to calculate pretty close to support your family and pay for the house.' Edward could not decline it; but he came home distressed, saying, 'How can I have it in my heart to leave such a people? Anything but this; — to be killed with kindness!'

"O, there are many, many pleasant things here, though, it is true, there have been some sad changes! Bessie Crampton is married, and gone. Our dear, lost Carrie, too, we must always miss. If her father felt as he used to feel, — if our good Deacon Ely were alive, — I believe this step would not be taken. But God knows what is best, and we have tried to commit our way to him. Dr. Alden says, some men consult Providence as the ancients did their oracles, making their own wishes their interpreter. I suppose he meant this for *us;* but I trust it is not applicable. I know he thinks we ought not to leave. He

has been very kind to us, never making any charge for his services.

"I intend to stop at home, for a good visit, on our way to our new residence. We shall be almost as near you there as here, only in an opposite direction. Ann would have deferred her marriage some time, had we remained here. As it is, she will not go to Millville, and I must have the trial of new help, among a strange people. With your philosophy, you would think this a small matter. Ah me! my heart will look anxiously into the future; and I find myself clinging to these last days here, as a child to its mother's neck.

"My love and duty to dear papa. I am so glad he thinks it best for us to go! though Edward looks a little serious upon hearing the reasons. *I* do not think he aspires after a higher place, or would be discontented here, if no one felt unjustly toward him. At any rate, the severance is painful to him; — more so than either of us anticipated."

Mr. Vernon had preached but a single Sabbath at Millville. He felt the inspiration of a crowded, admiring auditory. He was heard with a rapt attention, that always comes like a breath of incense to a speaker's heart. He stopped a day or two, and gave a temperance lecture to a large and popular assembly who scarce forbore to testify their interest by acclamation.

> "O, popular applause! what heart of man
> Is proof against thy sweet, seducing charms?"

Mr. Vernon returned to Salem, with an unwonted elasticity of mind and body. Mary had not seen his eye so sparkling, or his step so buoyant, for many a month. But after his call was received, and accepted, — after his brethren had met in council, and dissolved his pastoral relation, — when he sat down, in his quiet study, to pen his farewell sermon, his feelings experienced a quick and powerful reaction. The last sermon! O, how much is in that word, the *last!* There, too, was the last prayer-meeting; — not the promiscuous weekly conference, but what at first was called "The Young Convert's Meeting." This was a little band of praying

men, ten or twelve in number, who had met every week since the late revival, — most of them fruits of the first work of grace under Mr. Vernon's ministry. By social prayer and a free comparison of personal experiences, they carried out the mutual-assistance principle of primitive times. They knew one another's heart-trials; they noted one another's progress in the Christian life; they enjoyed and exemplified the fellowship of saints. Very precious was this communion to the pastor. How could the last interview be otherwise than affecting? While all avoided, as a contraband theme, the subject of the approaching separation, there was a subdued tenderness that showed this to be the burden of their thoughts. They went out, at the close, in silence, — all but our West-woods friend, Mr. Dennis. He planted himself firmly in the door, seizing the pastor's hand as he approached, with the exclamation, "I a'n't no way reconciled to this. I hope it a'n't wicked; but, if 't is, I can't help it. Bless me! What would Deacon Ely ha' said to this? It 's well he 's gone afore, for you was jes' like the apple of his eye."

Mr. Vernon made an effort at self-control, and said, "It is not good, Mr. Dennis, to lean too closely upon a fellow-creature."

"I know it, sir; but a'n't there some excuse for a poor critter like me, that you 've nourished as gently as a nurse her young? There 's a text som'wher's about the strong staff and beautiful rod, that keeps a comin' to my mind ever sin' the ministers untied the knot between us;" and he drew the back of his rough hand across his eyes. Both were silent, — the pastor revolving words of comfort; but Mr. Dennis rallied. "They say you never would ha' gone, but for Mr. Wood. He 's a man whose religion never done me much good, nohow!"

"Take care, brother Dennis; I cannot have you talk like that!" But the warm-hearted man had found a vent for his overcharged feelings in indignation at Mr. Wood; and he went

off the steps, muttering, "I don'no but he 's got grace; but he 's allers been a stiff-sot man — *dreadfully stiff-sot*."

The next morning, as Edward left the little back parlor, after prayers, he turned back, and said to Mary, abruptly, "My dear, I cannot bear *scenes*. A few more like the one last night will quite unman me. Our parting calls must be few and brief."

"We must visit, you know, at Mrs. Ely's to-morrow."

"Yes, now that we have promised; but I regret the engagement. We will take that opportunity to ride beyond to 'Roaring-brook,' and bid old Mrs. Harrison good-by."

Mary sighed. She knew how tenderly the aged blind woman loved them both.

It was, indeed, a sorrowful leave-taking. She held on to her young pastor's arm with both her withered hands. "I did not expect," said she, "that you would spend your ministry in Salem; but I did hope you might stay while my few sands hold out." Then she thanked him for all his kindness, and asked him to pray once more with her; and when, with husky voice, the prayer was offered, and he gave her the parting hand, she held it till she found words for a last request: "Is it too much to ask that, when I die, you will come to lay me in the grave, and preach my funeral sermon?"

"If I outlive you, and it is possible," he replied.

Mary kissed her tenderly, and said, "We will not call this a final good-by. We hope to return in a year, and visit among the people."

"Ah," said the venerable matron, "I doubt not you will come, and your voice will sound as sweetly as it does to-day; but I shall not be here to listen. Perhaps I may look down and *see* you then, — a privilege I am now denied. Farewell! The Lord bless you evermore."

They rode back to Mrs. Ely's, and it was more than her equanimity could do to tranquillize her guests. She was calm, though sorrowful, the silent tears taking care of themselves,

without choking her voice, or diverting her hands from the rites of hospitality. Olivia — poor girl! — not much could be expected of *her* but busy thought and agitated feeling. Mr. Vernon could talk only with "the boys," and upon indifferent topics, so that little was accomplished by the visit; and they left, accepting Leevy's offer, in broken words, of help about the packing, and promising to ride over again after the Sabbath.

But why linger further over these parting scenes, — scenes too experimentally familiar to many a reader of this simple history? How many a pastor, who, for slight cause, left his flock, has confessed, with a sigh, "I did not imagine what this dismission would cost my sensibilities!" And how often has the counterpart been uttered, "We never knew till now how much we loved our minister!" Blessed bond, of Heaven's own creating! Alas! that it should be ever trifled with, — that it should be lightly held, or rudely severed.

The Sabbath, with its solemn assembly and tearful wayside groups, has passed. The last calls have been hurried through; the goods and chattels of the parsonage loaded for the morrow's transportation; the denuded dwelling left without light or sound, and its inmates, worn and heartfull, are partaking the hospitality of Mrs. Cook, at the old boarding-place. The supper finished, and little Abby put to sleep in the very chamber that was Edward's bachelor sanctum, Mary put a shawl over her head, and, taking Julia Rogers' hand, strolled down, in the moonlight, to the deserted home. How beautiful it looked to her, now that she was leaving it! How vividly she recalled her entrance hither! How dear, as her first married home, the birth-place of her child! They went into the garden, where the late flowers were just in bloom; and, as Julia gathered a choice boquet, Mary stood in a reverie, wondering whose hands would next lay out the garden walks, and train the roses she had planted. A heavy dew was falling, and she must not linger.

Once more in the street. The house opposite stands in the

shadow, still and cold; the shutters closed, and a dim light gleaming through the kitchen window. The full moon is yet low in the east, and its slant rays fall across the green, and through the church-yard railing, and rest on a pure white marble pillar, with a rose-bush at its side. Ah! Mary kens full well who sleeps there; but she may not stop now for communion with the dead.

On the morrow, ere the sun was up, from the last point whence the parsonage was visible from the travelled road, two pairs of eyes looked eagerly back to the familiar spot, and a voice, cheerful, yet slightly regretful, said, "I wonder if we can ever love another home as well?" A manly voice, in a hopeful tone, responded, "It is home wherever the heart is;" while a sweet birdie caught the note, and echoed, "*Home*, — home, with dear papa." Those hearts were strong, though tender. The lips were tremulous with adieus to the past, but the future was hailed with bright hopes and cheerful trust.

CHAPTER XXII

"Minds altogether set
On trade and profit."

"Thou art not what thou seemst."

It has been often remarked that manufacturing villages are either much better, or much worse, than agricultural communities. The reason of this is quite obvious. In such villages, a few leading men give tone to the spirit of the place. Its business principles and habits, its moral and religious public sentiment, its educational privileges, the complexion of its dominant influences, in all departments of society, and, to a great extent, the individual character of its population, are determined by one or two master-spirits, the chief owners and rep-

resentatives of its commercial interests. If these are men of the right stamp, skilful in the conduct of business, far-seeing, liberal-minded, large-hearted, Christian men, the community which bears their image and superscription is above the ordinary level of communities gathered on a more democratic basis. Foundations are laid with a wise regard to the future and higher interests of the many, and the prosperity of the cause of Christ. The operative is regarded as something more than an available machine for enlarging the income of the employer. His individuality is not lost sight of and absorbed in "the concern." He is a *man*, responsible and accountable, with sacred rights, entitled to the privilege of an open path to competence and honor. Religious institutions and educational facilities are provided, — not with the least possible expense, as nominal appendages to a civilized community, but upon a liberal policy, as centres of interest and influence, around which everything else is to revolve. Here and there, throughout our beautiful New England, may be found some model villages answering to this description.

The other extreme is, however, the most common; — crowded settlements, gathered by the capitalist, whose end and aim is to make his own fortune, whatever interests are sacrificed in the process. These are the places where the largest amount of labor is performed at the lowest wages, — where the operatives are selected wholly for what they may avail to swell the gains of the employer, — where the rudely-constructed "boarding-house" is densely packed with a heterogeneous mass of humanity, — where trade is monopolized, and the price of living is high, — where there is poor encouragement for frugality and thrift, and every facility for reckless expenditure, — where congregated iniquity flourishes as in a hot-bed, — where common schools are low, and the pulpit stands by sufferance, or both are sought to be made subsidiary to the gain or aggrandizement of the manufacturer.

And to which of these classes belonged Millville? Have

patience, gentle reader, if the reply be, "Not quite to either." It surely was far from corresponding with the former; the lawyers would pronounce it libellous to class it with the latter.

Millville was, at this time, a village of five years' growth, — a reclaimed marsh between the hills, with a stream on either side, whose tortuous course would seem to indicate some early prescience of their destined use, which led them to go much out of their way, and take sundry dangerous leaps for the benefit of the future lords of the soil. The discoverers of this rare group of water-privileges blessed their guiding star, and marvelled at the stupidity that had left them so long overlooked and unimproved. Streams that were never dry! Waterfalls and millseats on every hand! Golden visions rose, that for once, at least, were destined to be "not all a dream."

Five years — and what changes! The quiet old town, half a league distant on the other side of the western hill, could hardly believe her eyes, or recognize this waste tract of her ancient domain. A woollen factory and cotton-mill stand on the twin streams at their nearest point of proximity, while beyond them, on either side, rise the massive foundery and the paper-mill. The bogs, drained and filled with gravel from the hills, assume the form of respectable terra firma, across which one street only deserves the name of "straight," — the other two conforming somewhat to the sinuosities of the stream. In the centre of the village, erected before building-lots were at a premium, with comfortable elbow-room, stands the oldest church edifice, its tall spire struggling up between the hills, in vain effort to see or be seen at a distance. Two other Christian temples, of later date, are wedged in with a row of shops and warehouses. A few spacious dwellings, and many smaller ones, of all sorts and sizes, hurriedly erected, fill up the picture.

What though the ground is low, and never sees the sun at its rise or setting? — what if the frost-king make here his earliest visits, and his last? — what though the air is humid,

and unhealthy vapors after nightfall chill the blood? — here throbs the restless, busy heart of a manufacturing village. It is a stirring, thriving place. All kinds of people are wanted here, and it has attractions for all.

The business of the place was mainly in the hands of three principal proprietors, — men whose policy nicely harmonized, and who monopolized the village trade at their respective establishments, all giving their operatives "store pay," at high prices. If there were any villagers who were not producers, or whose interests were not in some way involved with the factories, disposed to murmur at the price of merchandise, there was no remedy but a journey of some distance to a town where competition made prices equitable.

The three moneyed men aforesaid held a nominal connection with the Christian church; but so absorbed were they in their worldly schemes, that it was sometimes difficult to tell whether they served God or mammon. They had too much conscience, ay, and too much regard to their business interests, not to support the institutions of the gospel; but there was about their own example little savor of practical godliness. They were shrewd, cool, worldly-wise men. They wanted a handsomely-furnished church, and a talented minister, and were willing to offer a nominally generous salary. This done, they felt at liberty to put *him* under the screw, as they would any other operative in their pay; — *that* was all in the way of business.

Mr. Smith, their first pastor, began the enterprise of building up a congregation. He was indefatigable, and worked hard, and was quite successful; but they soon outgrew him, and he must give place to a more popular man. They were "a growing people," and they made large calculations. "They should soon have a railway, and they meant to have a bank; and in half-a-dozen years they would become a borough; and some ten years thereafter they *might* be a *city*. Other sects were towering up among them; it was really important to get a

smart man as Mr. Smith's successor." So they ran to and fro, and sent for many a theologue; but none who came at their call had, in their estimation, sufficient "pile of forehead" to match their diadem. At length they borrowed a new city notion, and despatched a delegation to sit under one and another unsuspecting pulpit.

Their report from Salem was so glowing, that a resolution was passed, at once, authorizing the committee to make a statement to Mr. Vernon, and invite him to preach a Sabbath in Millville. This was met by a declinature, made in all sincerity, which served only to strengthen desire on the part of the applicants. They kept their eye on the Salem minister, and, when circumstances seemed more favorable, renewed the request. He came, as we have seen, and the waves of popular approval ran high; and definite proposals for settlement were made with speed. The chairman of the committee, Mr. Moulton, was a shrewd, plausible man. He talked largely and fluently of the prosperous condition of Millville. He pointed to the extensive business of the place, to his foundery in particular, — the largest establishment of the kind in New England. He pointed to their handsome church and parsonage, asserting that in the last two years they had built the latter and furnished the former, in addition to the purchase of a fine bell. He spoke of their liberal appropriation for sacred music the previous winter. And as to the *salary*, — *they* knew what it cost to live; they wanted their minister to live handsomely; they would give seven hundred dollars *now*, and doubted not they would be able to increase the sum, after another year or two, as they were "a growing people." To be sure, house-rent was rather high; they should be obliged to ask a hundred for the parsonage; but they got up splendid donation parties here, which would nearly counterbalance this deduction.

These flattering items, which were received as sober verity, we will bear in mind, as we shall have occasion to refer to them hereafter.

The prospect looked bright to the young minister; the pleasing exterior caught his fancy; he accepted "the call." Had he known that it was the mere outside of the parish he had seen, and *that* the most imposing, — had he been told that he had not caught the first truthful glimpse of its interior life in its relations to the pastorate, — he would have hesitated long to leave an intelligent, reliable and confiding people, for the ostentatious, slippery, fickle parish of Millville.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Is it true, think you?"
"Very true. Why should I carry lies abroad?"

Mr. Vernon's second installation is over, and his family settled, as far as may be at present, in the parsonage. Let us look a little into his pecuniary affairs, and see how they stand at this era in his history. It is nearly three years since he purchased his house in Salem. He has been able, as he expected, to pay the interest on his borrowed money, and reduce the principal a hundred dollars yearly. But he is disappointed now in not finding a purchaser. The society will not take it as a parsonage, till they settle another minister, and this they seem not likely to do in a hurry. There is no opportunity to rent it at present. So it stands solitary, and the door-key hangs over Mr. Cook's kitchen mantel, — sad reminder there, calling forth many a burst of homely eloquence in pathetic lamentation.

Black Pompey has gone with his master to Millville; a noble animal, truly, and a noble price it will cost to keep him there, as his owner will find, when he gets his eyes open.

The expense of the transfer of household stuff has somewhat overrun previous calculation. Several new pieces of furniture have been purchased, and the well-filled purse, which was to be

responsible for the living of the first quarter, is (to begin with) nearly empty. But Mr. Vernon anticipates no serious trouble; he can borrow, or live on credit awhile; his salary must be ample enough to cancel all his obligations at the year's end. He was sorry, on the whole, that he had not insisted on a quarterly or semi-annual payment. He did mention it as desirable; but the reply was, "It is not best to bring up the thing in form before the society; there will be no difficulty about it. Call on our treasurer for money, whenever you want it." It did not occur to him that he might call on an empty treasury.

Not many hours after he entered the parsonage, Mr. Moulton appeared, with his smiling face and smooth address. His wife had sent a basket of provisions, and *he* called to say that he had a good assortment of groceries at the brick store, and would be happy to open an account with Mr. Vernon; and, as the latter bowed, and said he should need articles in that line, and would remember it, Mr. M., in the most natural way, took a pencil and card from his pocket, adding, "You have a good many steps to take sir, — just give me a list of what you want, and I will step round to the store, put them up, and send my man over with them." He then proceeded to enumerate, "tea, sugar, coffee," Mr. Vernon assenting (all the while, unpacking a box of goods), till it occurred to him that the list was swelling, and he said, abruptly, "Nothing more, Mr. Moulton; what you have will make something of a bill." The merchant bowed in his most gentlemanly way, and responded, "Give yourself no trouble about that; our firm (Moulton & Son) is one of the largest supporters. Let the account run through the year, and we will make a set-off. Anything you want in our line, we shall be happy to furnish you."

A little after, the corpulent Mr. Elton came puffing in on the same errand, and, learning what had taken place, said, good-humoredly, "You must divide your patronage among us, Mr. Vernon."

In the course of the same day, the thin, sharp visage of Mr

Walter (proprietor of the cotton mill), was seen peering round the parsonage. He was a man of few compliments, who looked, with eagle eye, at any chance of gain. He coolly asked the cost of every *new* article he saw; said he kept some "furnishing goods," at his warehouse, — among other things, a lot of cooking-stoves, and materials for upholstery; and he added, significantly, "I suppose you will give the preference, in trade, to your own people."

"A new state of things this, to me," said Edward, thoughtfully; as, before the week was through, he received offers of hay, wood, butter, lard and vegetables; in which cases, when he spoke of payment, the reply invariably was, "We shall be owing the society; if you will give us *an order* we would like to turn it." No matter if his purse were low; what need of ready money in so obliging a community?

A letter of Mrs. Vernon's, at this time, admits us to her first impressions of the place and people.

"My dear Father, —

"I know you must have waited anxiously for something more from us than the hurried note, informing you of our safe arrival. Days since then have come and gone, and I have not found myself adequate to all the demands upon my time and strength. It is well you decided for me that I should not come till after the installation; the excitement *now* is more than you would judge altogether best for me.

"Our house-keeping arrangements have been greatly retarded. The parsonage, during the ten months' interregnum, was rented to a family not over-nice in their habits. They left only a fortnight before our arrival; then the house was to be purified, some painting and papering done, and outside blinds put up. Three days before we came they commenced operations, and a tedious business they make of it. The paint in the parlors was too fresh to allow us to furnish; the paper in the back parlor did not hold out, and nothing could be done there till

they could send to the city for more. The protracted process of putting on the blinds added to the confusion. We had to make ourselves comfortable in the kitchen, and unpack our goods slowly as places were ready for them. The scene was varied by frequent calls from the people, evidently curious to get an idea of the minister's family; besides two or three invitations to tea, at gatherings made specially for us, which we declined as unseasonable, — thereby incurring, I fear, the displeasure of one aristocratic lady. I summoned Patience to my side, and walked with her, feeling, however, that something must be lacking in the parish, or the place would have been ready for our reception. Nor was I at all consoled by the remark, that fell from the lips of more than one who called, 'This is always the way of things in Millville.'

"Sunday, I went out to one service; but I should not dare write you all I felt on the occasion. The congregation had a fashionable air, and were quite attentive. There was on every hand a brusque air of expectation, as if they had come to be entertained, rather than profited. They evidently admired the preacher, and were interested in the preachment; but I missed, — O, how sadly! — the spiritual atmosphere of our Sabbath assemblies at Salem. I may misjudge; but no, — this is a thing not to be observed, but felt; the heart detects it unerringly. I have not been home-sick, except in church. There my heart ached, and it was only by isolating my thoughts from the scene, and fleeing as a bird to her mountain, that I found peace.

"You will expect to hear my first impressions of this goodly village. Let me tell you, then, of two or three things that struck me at once.

"One was, a sense of imprisonment; shut in, environed round with hills, we seem to be down in the depths, — not exactly in the 'valley of humiliation,' but low enough for that. I felt at first as if I could breathe freer up on the heights.

"Another thing was, that people *live faster* here than in any

place I have known. Everything moves with speed · everybody is in a hurry. The nights are short. The musical bell of the cotton-mill falls on our drowsy ear at daybreak; then rings out the ponderous stroke of the foundery, and the others follow in quick succession. The streets presently swarm with the operatives hurrying to their toil, — men and women, youth and children. Six times a day this throng sweeps back and forth. So much noise and bustle is strangely disagreeable; though I must confess to an impulse from the life and enterprise around me. Even this poor quill must have been '*grown* hereabouts, for it dashes on at a pace which sorely tires the hand that holds it.

"Little Abby, as grandpa' predicted, behaves finely among strangers. It is well she is not a child to be easily spoiled by flattery. I foresee her dear papa will wish he had more of the same humility and simplicity. The people shower him with compliments, the tone of which I do not relish. He says it is not delicate enough to hurt him. It seems to me that they praise him, as they do their wares, because he is *theirs*. It is '*our* Mr. Vernon,' and '*our* minister.' I fear the majority think more of his building them up in reputation and numbers, than in the graces of the Spirit. But I must not talk in this way; they are our people, and I mean to love them.

"In the matter of 'help,' I fear we have not done wisely. The woman is an experienced house-keeper, but she is acquainted with everybody here, and makes more gossip about my domestic affairs, than I could wish.

"We have just received a precious letter from brother William, which I will enclose. It was directed to us at Salem. How sad to think he will not know of our change of location for three months to come!

"We hope to welcome you to our new home as soon as your business will allow. Meanwhile, and ever, you will continue, dear father, to supplicate for us grace and wisdom from on high. We never needed your prayers more than now. I hope

we have not done wrong in coming here. I cannot feel at home yet, except at the closet and family altar. Thank God, there need be no strangeness *there!* The *soul* has its sure abode, — its familiar rest.

"Love to all. Edward is too busy to add a line.

"Tenderly yours,

"MARY."

Mary's intuitive perception was not at fault, when she construed the people's praise of their minister into self-glorification. The place had risen so rapidly in the hands of its founders, as to make their heads a little unsteady. They were not content to stop here, and rest awhile, and settle anew their foundations. Full of restless aspirings, they wanted, — they knew not what, — only something larger and more magnificent. Their minister was a popular man, and they relied on him to carry forward the *religious* end of the enterprise. The *business* end, — the heavier, — they were willing to carry themselves.

Society here was in its elements, — discordant ones, many of them, with little prospect of a speedy amalgamation. Intricate and complicated as was the position of these heterogeneous materials, Mr. Vernon was not slow in comprehending it, though it made him feel like a man overreached in a bargain.

The prominent business-men of the place were respectable, church-going Christians, — in their seats on the Sabbath; finding time even for a temperance or lyceum meeting, where their minister was the orator; and loud in their hosannas with the multitude, while in every humble effort they forsook him. The social prayer-meeting they habitually neglected, and any personal activities in a religious way entirely eschewed. If called on by an agent for charity, they turned him over to the minister; *they* were too busy. If a case of humble suffering were to be patiently relieved, they commended it to their wives.

A curious state of things was this. It would seem that these business-men conceived of their secular and their spiritual calling as two distinct interests, that would be injured by contact. Therefore, they committed the latter, generally, to their pastor; particularly intrusting to their "better half" the keeping of their conscience and Christian sensibility during business hours, resuming them each Lord's day for purposes of devotion. And, very faithful were these good women to the trust, considering the peculiar nature of the consignment.

Mrs. Walter was a woman of sunny face and generous heart; not overmuch refined; ready to acknowledge freely what her husband ought to do, yet straitened in her charities by his penuriousness, — bestowing little else than her sympathies, and the crumbs that fell from her table.

Mrs. Moulton was a *lady* in every sense of the word; a cultivated Christian woman; quiet, warm-hearted, judicious; the constant friend of the ministry, the discriminating benefactress of the poor, ordering well her own house; the heart of her husband safely trusting in her.

But Mrs. Elton was decidedly the ruling spirit of the village. She was a woman of superior intellect, of quick discernment, and uncommon activity; with a religious experience outwardly of the same type as her husband's business habits; untiring and persevering in effort; ambitious for the advancement of the Christian enterprise, upon which she had set her heart. The movement, indeed, owed its origin to her; and she had kept her hand upon it, from the formation of the infant church, to the selection of the last piece of crimson drapery for the pulpit. True, it was said of her that she would have things her own way; but what mattered it, so long as her way was generally right? She was a good woman, — the mainstay of the female prayer-meeting, and of the various benevolent associations. If her piety abounded in externals, and conferred largely with worldly wisdom, it also wrought in her soul much deep and tender affection. She was the pastor's

privy-counsellor and aid. The shop hands called her husband "the general;" and, now and then, a wag in the village applied the title to her, as more appropriate.

There, too, were the Seldens, — decided aristocrats, living on their "interest-money," — proud, worldly, exclusive.

Another element in the religious community was a class of disciples, who — if the term were not too harsh — might be called fanatics. They were full of zeal, noisy, and declamatory; bringing religious activity into disrepute by their ill-timed and over-heated efforts.

Between this class, and the men of wealth and power who stood at the other extreme, were a few substantial farmers, living in the outskirts of the village, on the cultivated slopes of the western hills; plain Christian men, who left Dr. Mather's church over the hill, to help form the nucleus of a religious community in the village. True-hearted and stable, they were, perhaps, the most reliable class in the church. Such were farmer Wells and Mr. Norton.

Then, there were many small mechanics, and a host of transient people, coming and going with the month or year; and the operatives in the factories, with few local attachments, swayed hither and thither by the prevailing current.

With such a band of brethren as he left behind him in Salem, the pastor would have girded himself for the work, with a light heart. But, as he looked around for fellow-laborers, they were few and quite uncongenial. In his natural allies, the *deacons*, he finds neither an Aaron nor a Hur. That office was quite out of the line of any of the dignitaries of Millville. The plain agriculturists were too modest to accept it. It was, therefore, given to men who would take it.

When Mr. Vernon became acquainted with his official co-adjutors, he was ready to exclaim with the apostle, — "Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you?"

Deacon Nobles was a man of undoubted piety, but of humble

gifts, illiterate and uninformed; very foggy in his views; an admirer and echo of Deacon Slocum.

Deacon Sydney Slocum was, by nature, a "radical;" a man of restless, active mind, pugnacious temperament, and tenacious will. He was the most active religionist in Millville, and, fortunately, there were but two or three others of the same stamp.

His sister, Mrs. Rachel Harris, was a woman of similar native qualities, with a larger admixture of grace, and a heart alive to the degradation and woe of her species. Both she and her brother were ardent agitators and reformers; as such, their good old mother rejoiced and gloried in them.

For a while after Mr. Vernon's settlement all these forces moved, or rather existed, without collision. He was unboundedly popular at home, and his name was heralded abroad. He was fluent in debate, and the young men had him once or twice in their "Club." When a manly youth said to him, enthusiastically, "You argued our side of the question, sir, like a lawyer," a chord vibrated to an old and well-remembered touch.

His fame spread abroad, and he was asked to preach and lecture far and near. To decline, was to displease his influential parishioners, proud of their minister. To meet all demands he toiled harder than ever before. Twice he tried his early plan of extemporizing in the pulpit at one service. Deacon Slocum was much edified; but there followed significant hints, from head-quarters, that written sermons gave the best satisfaction. He was not a man to submit to dictation; yet, after this, he thought he should miss his wonted freedom of utterance. So, as usual, he took for the morning a manuscript from his old stores, and prepared a fresh discourse for the afternoon, — often an old theme carefully revised and elaborated.

There were many extras to prepare for. It was now a speech to the "Temperance Juveniles," and now an address before the Maternal Association. To animate the choir for the

winter's campaign of rehearsals, the idea struck Mrs. Elton, of inviting the pastor to preach a sermon on sacred music. Mrs. Harris thought it would aid the work of tract distribution, if Mr. Vernon would look into the matter, and make a statement to the congregation; and she gave him two sheets of statistics.

Thus he went from one labor to another, at home and abroad, performing an amount of service that astonished himself. There are two sets of circumstances in which a man will go beyond himself, and perform prodigies. One, when he is cut off from all human appreciation and aid, and thrown solely on the divine arm. The other, when great things are expected of him, and he is cheered at every step by the praises of those for whom he toils.

Our young minister was, indeed, disgusted with much of the adulation he received. When he could not exchange with his very respectable and even gifted brethren in the vicinity, without being compelled to hear the thing sentimentally deplored, he was ashamed of his people, and almost thought meanly of himself. When, on one such occasion, it was reported to him that Mr. Walter said, in the porch, "We ought to have boot to-day;" and, on another, Mrs. Selden asked, contemptuously, "Where Mr. Vernon picked up this man to preach for us," he was truly indignant.

Yet, aside from this fulsome applause, was the *fact* of his popularity, his influence. This, with the consciousness that he was *earning* it, was very gratifying to him. Thus, all that winter, he toiled nobly.

Meanwhile, how fares it with our dear Mary? Was she quietly left, like the mistress of any other family, to take care of her husband and her house? No, indeed! Was she not the pastor's wife? Is it not fit and proper that she should preside in the Maternal Association? — that she be first directress of the sewing circle? — that she take the chair in the Tract Society? — that she conduct the female prayer-meeting, weekly, at her own house? — that she visit the sick, and keep

an open ear to every tale of want? — that she grace the social gathering with her presence, and be ready to receive calls and visits from any of the hundred and twenty families represented in the congregation? As all these claims urged themselves upon Mrs. Vernon, worn with the fatigue of household cares, an untoward event released her for a while from the busy round upon which she had entered. This was no less than the birth of a son, quite in advance of any expectation of his arrival.

The gossips shook their heads, and "feared we were to have another feeble minister's wife; — this was just the way Mrs. Smith went down." But, — thanks to a kind Providence and a good constitution, and, in part, to the judicious attentions of Mrs. Moulton, — such a calamity was, for the present, averted. One thing, however, was unfortunate, — the situation of the family was such, at New-Years', that, instead of the annual gathering, yclept a donation party, the people were obliged to send their gifts singly to the parsonage Mr. Vernon made an estimate of everything at its maximum, and the aggregate value was thirty dollars. This fact he had no intention to proclaim publicly; but Mr. Walter felt no delicacy about a question of dollars and cents, and he, from mere curiosity, asking the sum, received an unequivocal answer. When this was noised abroad, much chagrin was felt in the community. The spontaneous cry was, "It is too bad!" Everybody thought somebody must be to blame. Mrs. Walter ingenuously confessed, that she "told Walter 't was real mean in him to carry so little." Mrs. Elton said the young people should go by-and-by and spend an evening at the parsonage, and make up a purse. Mr. Moulton took occasion to apologize, in his smooth way, and explain that "the thing was not generally understood; the people were put out of their wonted course, and there was some mistake; he was confident the arrearage would be more than brought up another year." Mrs. Moulton testified her regrets by quietly walking over to the brick store, selecting the nicest

piece of cotton shirting, with linen to match, and carrying it on her own arm across to the parsonage.

Mrs. Vernon's observation during her illness, made her somewhat distrustful of her "hired help." Miss Polly, as she was called, was a smart widow of thirty-five; who, in one capacity or another, had become familiar with all the prominent families of the village. She was an expert house-keeper, — fond of pursuing her own way without dictation or interference. Confined for weeks to her own room, Mrs. Vernon noticed, with some uneasiness, that a majority of the ladies (?) who called on her, desired to step into the kitchen a moment and see "Miss Polly;" and that such momentary calls often slid into a close and protracted conference, which, she could not doubt, had reference to her own domestic affairs. For the present, she could not think of initiating new help; so she bore the annoyance silently.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"A word fitly spoken."

"Many men, of many minds."

How often does some thought, lightly stirred, and seemingly inadequate to any great result, like a pebble cast into the lake, produce concentric waves of feeling, till the whole soul moves obedient to its power! On a Saturday evening in February, our young minister sat at his family fireside, looking long and thoughtfully at the burning Lehigh.

"You are down early to-night," said the affectionate wife, as she came from the nursery, with little Allison in her arms.

"Yes," was the reply; "though I have not finished my sermon."

"O, Edward!" said she, quickly; "don't go back to your

study to-night, — you make so many late evenings, — take an old sermon."

"The very thing I have resolved to do," responded he. "Yet, I find I have preached the best of them. The stock, too, is getting low."

"Ah!" said she; "but for me, you would have fewer still. I said you would some day regret having burned so many."

"Your prophecies," he replied, smiling, "do not often fail; but there, indeed, you were mistaken. Those sermons, over whose conflagration you wasted some precious tears, made more light in that way, poor things, than they could have done in any other. Not but that I wrote some passable sermons in Salem; yet my style of sermonizing has changed somewhat since then."

"Yes," replied she, hastily. "But *I* love *best* to hear you preach those old sermons, as you call them."

"What do you mean, Mary?" said he, startled by her earnest tone.

She looked at him a moment, hesitatingly, then said, with much emotion, "I know, my husband, that you study diligently, and write with care. Your sermons are more eloquent and nicely finished; there is often more originality and depth, and grasp of thought; but they strike me, most of them, so differently from those in the old Salem pulpit."

"What *is* the difference to your ear? What is wanting?"

"To my *ear* — nothing."

"What, then?" persisted he.

"To my *heart*, *spirituality*, *unction*, *Christ* in the word, a *living power!* Forgive me, dearest; I never *said* this to *myself* before. I have *felt* it, but smothered the feeling." She bent over the babe, but he saw a tear fall.

"A word fitly spoken," — a word in due season, — how good is it!

It was late that night ere Edward Vernon slept. He was

looking into his own heart as he had not done for months; questioning his motives; scrutinizing his secret springs of thought and feeling. Those few words, "spirituality," "unction," "a living Christ," rung in his soul, and with them the declaration of the Great Teacher, "My words are spirit and life."

The next day he was too unsettled to preach well; but from that time he resolved to humble himself, and beg his sermons of God in prayer. He detected the latent sparks of self-seeking and desire of fame. While he had been so long burnishing the intellect, his heart had not, indeed, grown cold; but he had sometimes mistaken the kindling glow of natural sensibility for the purer warmth of close communion with the source of vital light and heat.

Henceforth the preaching in Millville pulpit was more pungent and practical. The conscience of loose, worldly professors was a little stirred. This was certainly coming closer than they liked; but they knew it would suit the good old Christians of the suburbs, and do somewhat to conciliate the radicals, who were beginning to eye the minister askance. So they bore it patiently; — some with assumed nonchalance; others with bowed heads, as if taking a comfortable nap. (Doubtful whether anybody slept in church about those days.)

Presently there was an unwonted stillness in the Sabbath audiences. The pastor's heart beat with hope and solicitude. The leaven of truth was fermenting in the community. O, that the whole mass might be leavened!

Very quietly he sought interviews, here and there, promiscuously, to deepen the impressions of the pulpit. In the same noiseless way, he set to work the most spiritual of the brethren. One and another dropped in to the weekly prayer-meeting, — hitherto a solitary place, — till the room was filled. A few more weeks of continuous effort, in this way, and the work of God, gathering power in secret, will develop outwardly, in a strong and glorious conquest of the truth and spirit.

But Deacon Slocum is, by this time, in danger of explosion. Two weeks ago, at the evening meeting, he rose, unasked, and offered a prayer, in which, to Mr. Vernon's horror, was the petition, "O Lord, come now, by thy Spirit, and work salvation! *If thou never come again, come now!*" After the prayer, he spoke, with little savor of meekness, informing the hearers that "the Lord was coming among them with power. He had not a doubt of it. The place was about to be shaken, as with an earthquake. A great revival was at hand, and woe unto those who came not up to the help of the Lord!" Mr. Vernon was greatly discomposed. At the close of the meeting, he talked long and earnestly with the deacons, and told them what would be lost by such precipitancy and extravagance. Since that night, he had held them in, as it were, by bit and bridle.

On the other hand, his prudent professors came to him, and praised his conservatism. "They were glad to see a growing seriousness, but deprecated excitement in such a community. It was very judicious in the minister to have no extra meetings, except a third service on the Sabbath," &c. &c.

With men of this extreme, the pastor had less sympathy, even, than with the other. Between the two, he was almost at his wits' end. But matters could not tarry long in this position. Mrs. Harris felt called upon to make amends for the minister's moderation and the lukewarmness of the brethren, by her own personal efforts with individual sinners; and her conscience pointed to just those cases which her good sense and modesty should have left to others. She had asked Mr. Vernon for more preaching, and suggested the expedient of an "anxious seat" and "inquiry meeting."

Both she and her brother were impatient at the slow progress of things. They conferred with a few kindred spirits, and concluded it might be possible that the Lord could not work through the instrumentality of a church so corrupt and worldly as their own. Under this notion, they went in, of an evening to pray

with the Methodist brethren, among whom, as yet, all was quiet. There they unburdened their hearts, and kindled a spark that soon spread into a flame. The next movement was the appointment of a "four days' meeting" at the Methodist church. The community was astir with expectation; — the current was in motion.

Then the worldly-wise Christians changed their ground. They feared this competition would injure their society. Mr. Walter wondered what Mr. Vernon meant by not having more meetings. He ought to have kept the start of the Methodists." Mr. Moulton insinuates his advice. "It may be best to hold no more meetings in the lecture-room, but appoint them in the church, and have preaching every evening, and let the *bell* be rung and tolled at the hour." (It was the only church-bell in the village.)

As matters are, the pastor sees no alternative; but his heart is heavy with disappointed hope. Both churches are crowded, night after night; great excitement prevails; the people run hither and thither; many objectionable things are done, — Mr. Vernon not consenting, but unable to control the fanatical clique, who piece out his meetings by a late after-sitting with the Methodist brethren. By-and-by the commotion subsides; daily preaching is suspended; the prayer-meeting reverts to the old lecture-room, whither the chief dignitaries, as usual, do not follow; the pastor is exhausted, — more by his efforts to keep the ark from the profane touch of its friends, than by aggressive movements upon the kingdom of Satan; a considerable number of converts enter the Methodist class; a smaller number propose to unite with Mr. Vernon's church, but are wisely delayed. Meanwhile he establishes a weekly meeting for their examination and instruction. It makes upon him large demands; but he will take any pains, rather than overload the church with spurious disciples. The sifting process goes on, and in three months he receives to his church, the fruit of all his outlay and toil, ten persons; being

all in regard to whose Christian character he is clearly satisfied. He is humbled, and retraces the whole scene with sorrowful perplexity. Ah! he is not the only honest laborer for Christ who has had such occasion to muse, sad and perplexed.

Mr. Vernon, however, may as well dismiss past troubles. There are enough, present and prospective, to put all his Christian philosophy in requisition. Of some active spirits in his church, he might say, as David of the sons of Zeruiah, "They are too hard for me." He looked on every side, in vain, for the warm, fraternal hearts that used to beat with his in the Salem praying circle. His soul missed the spiritual culture and joy of that close fellowship. The pastor needs, — why should he not? — as well as the layman, the communion of the saints, as a means of nourishment and strength. How often did he recur to the little band who once stood around him, as a body-guard of soldiers round their leader! There was not one, the least gifted, but was to him more of a brother than any he had found in Millville. His heart yearned for the old interchange of prayer and experience. "O!" said he, one night, after his return from the lecture-room, "if I could hear even brother Dennis pray, rough and inaccurate as he is, it would quite cheer me up. I would n't mind his asking that we might 'set our faces, *as a flint*, Zionward,' or his favorite simile of 'an arrow headed at both ends,' or his rude grasp of my hand, like a vise."

"The last," replied Mary, "you ought to expect of him, as he has been a *vicious* man so long. But what has happened to-night? You look really sick."

"I *am* heart-sick," said the poor minister. "Our meetings have dwindled to about the old number. None present, to-night, from beyond the village, but Mr. Norton and his son. I can see in them a growing spirituality. I went a little behind the time, I believe, — five minutes, or so. Well, — would you believe it? — Deacon Slocum had begun the meeting. There he was, in my seat, by the desk, reading a portion of Scripture

He saw me enter, but finished the chapter, and then coolly asked me if I would take the chair."

"Which you did, of course."

"Yes; but he made, afterward, no explanation or apology."

"Deacon Nobles is more modest than to do such a thing," said Mary.

"Perhaps he is," was the reply; "or too stupid to think of it. He is *so* ignorant! We walked up together, from the meeting. Something led me to a remark on the subject of Divine Providence, when he said that he believed in a *general* Providence; but he never liked to have *every little occurrence* ascribed to Providence. It always seemed to him beneath so great a being as God to attend to such small and unimportant matters."

"Why, Edward!' What did you say to him?"

"Not much," said Mr. Vernon. "I felt as if it would be wasting words to try to set him right."

"But *you must do it*, my dear."

"I suppose I must *try*. O, shade of Deacon Ely!" exclaimed the poor man, passionately. "I fear, Mary, I have not the grace of patience to labor here."

Ah! marvel not, thou servant of God, that thou shouldst be put in the crucible. It may yet be needful to heat the furnace one seven-times more than its wont; but thou art under the Refiner's hand, who will see that thy dross only is consumed in the trial.

The weeks roll on, and the pastor with them, — constantly on the alert, like the anxious driver of an over-loaded vehicle, drawn by animals many and ill-assorted. Foremost in the multitudinous array is the zealous deacon. He would draw with all his might, when he could lead, and carry all at his own rate of speed; but woe to the whole team if there come a pause! No use to put up the check; — he will take the bit in his teeth, and dash right or left, no matter where, so he can but be moving.

Sister Rachel, thanks to the patience and wisdom of the pastor's wife, though impetuous, is kept within the traces.

And moving with the cavalcade, yet looking another way, are the rich, the honorable, the prudent, who, like the nobles of Tekoa, put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

The summer is nearly spent, when Mr. Vernon is summoned to the old homestead, on the occasion of his aged father's demise, — an event long expected.

His purse was, at this time, very low; — indeed, it had for months been the receptacle of a single bill at a time, — a five, or ten; oftener less, — some marriage fee, or the remuneration for lecturing abroad. He had, several times, asked the treasurer to advance him a small sum; but always, with one exception, received the reply, that "there was no money in." His salary was now nearly due, and, confident of success, he postponed the application till ready for his journey. To his surprise, he met the old story, "no money in the treasury." What should he do? It was suggested that he might obtain it by calling on his prominent pew-holders He had no time to lose. Mr. Elton was the nearest man. "He would be glad to do it, but he was already used up. He wished he did owe the society; but, unfortunately, the society owed him more than enough to cover his yearly contribution. They were in debt for the bell, and he took the debt off their hands. It was about thirty dollars." Without waiting for further particulars, Mr. Vernon hurried over to the brick store. Mr. Moulton had gone to the foundery. Thither he followed, and made known his errand. Mr. Moulton "was astonished to hear the treasury was empty, so near the end of the year; but, indeed, he did not see as he could help the matter. Those blinds on the parsonage were procured by subscription. It lay along, without being closed, six months, when payment was demanded, and he found there was a deficit of twenty dollars, and *he* paid it. He had often done such things, and said nothing; but he thought, this time, he would let it go toward his pew-rent."

A long story, Mr. Vernon thought, when he found the money was yet to be looked after. "Would Mr. Walter be likely to advance it?" said he, leaving hastily. "Stop, sir," said Mr. Moulton, "you are in haste, and it is too much trouble to run after him." (He knew it was of no use, and he was sensitive to the reputation of the society.) "Let me *lend* you what you want for this emergency." And he placed ten dollars in his pastor's hand, with the suavity of one who was receiving a favor. It had not escaped his penetrating eye, that there was in Mr. Vernon's face something expressive of a sudden enlightenment in regard to the financial concerns of the parish.

A vague uneasiness about his pecuniary affairs haunted the pastor's mind thereafter for many days. Upon his return, his first leisure was devoted to a critical examination of his expenses during the year. To his astonishment, he found that he had given orders to the amount of three hundred dollars, for which he hardly felt that he could have had their equivalent. A large bill for provender was not included. His running accounts with the merchants he had no means of estimating, except at one shop, where the purchases were entered in a little book kept by himself. Here, the amount surprised him, and he began to fear that his salary would not cover his current expenses. The secret he had yet to learn.

Pay-day arrived, confirming his fears. He was fifty dollars in debt; and, to add to the confusion, the society proved delinquent toward him in the same amount.

The leading men made the best of the matter. "It had been a hard year for the society. The salary was a hundred dollars more than they had paid formerly. On the whole, they had done pretty well. Mr. Vernon must wait on them a while. The next quarter's pew-rent will settle up."

But when he told them, seriously, that the whole salary, for some reason, failed to meet his expenditures, their complacency was evidently disturbed. Various were the ways in which the astounding fact was accounted for, among the people. The

loudest outcry was, "The *horse*, — that large, fine horse, which had eaten him up!" — "A foolish piece of business," said Mr. Walter. "What did he want of a horse?" — "Very mean in you to talk so, Walter," said his outspoken wife (it was very difficult for her to follow Sara's example, and give her husband a title, when everybody else addressed him without it) — "very mean. You know he had all the people in the outskirts to get acquainted with."

Mrs. Selden tossed her head, and "thought, when she first saw those splendid curtains at the parlor windows of the parsonage, that Millville people would not be able to support such extravagance. *She* did not think of such curtains herself. Her daughter in the city had them, but they were very expensive."

Mr. and Mrs. Elton said, "Don't be alarmed. It 's only their first year among us, and it takes something to get settled." Mrs. Moulton suggested that they had incurred a sickness bill at the parsonage, and that their "'help' was not the most economical." Mrs. Harris looked distressed, and Deacon Slocum "guessed the minister did n't work it right."

But the minister and his wife resolved to know the wherefore themselves. Diligently investigating, they found they had received half their salary in "orders"; and that for every article purchased at the village stores they had paid, at *least*, twenty-five per cent. on city prices. What marvel that they were fifty dollars in debt!

CHAPTER XXV.

"There are more things in heaven
And earth, Horatio, than thou hast dreamt of
In thy philosophy."

"SOMETHING is always happening most years, said Miss Wetherell's Dutch farmer. In respect to the year now before us to be chronicled, it seemed as if *everything* was happening, and all together. It opened upon our minister in difficulty and doubt, and with many ominous shadows, stretching toward him, of coming evil. Mindful of the inspired adage, "A brother is born for adversity," he resolved upon a visit to Norfield, to seek some relief from his present straits.

It was, indeed, a comfort to feel the grasp of that strong fraternal hand, and listen to words of hope and cheer.

"It is rather a narrow place," said brother James, "but we will contrive a way through;" and sister Julia rallied him on his long face, till his saddened spirit caught the tone of theirs There, too, was the sense of protection under the old roof-tree, such as he used to feel when a boy. It seemed easier, there, to trust his heavenly Father's love.

"Let 's see," said James; "you have a tenant in your own house. When will the first half-year's payment be due for rent? — in two months? Well, that will pay the interest due Captain Newell on the four hundred."

"But the interest is due next week," said the anxious debtor.

"Wait, Ned, and hear me through. My crops have come in finely, and I am rather aforehanded for money. *I* will pay the interest, and tell the captain he must wait for the principal till you can sell the place. When you get your rent, you can refund, if you don't want the money more for something else."

Edward expressed his gratitude; then added, sorrowfully, "I cannot think of keeping a horse, hereafter; so Pompey and I must part."

"Leave him with me," said the kind brother, "and go home by the stage-coach and cars. I can sell him to the best advantage. What deep thought strikes you now?"

"O!" replied Edward, rousing from his reverie; "I will leave him, and thank you, too. But you need not sell him at present. Wait till you hear from me. I was looking ahead, that 's all. As for my debts in Millville" —

"Square them off," said the farmer; "it hurts a minister's credit to be in debt among his own people. Better borrow fifty dollars, and give your note. As to the other fifty, *I* should push the society pretty hard for it."

"And if you obtained it," responded Edward, "you might have the satisfaction of feeling that it was taken from the resources upon which the next payment must depend. That 's the way my parish keep up their boast of being out of debt. They use up all their best men in advance." But he resolved to take his brother's advice. James borrowed the fifty dollars on his own security, and Mr. Vernon returned with a lighter heart.

He sent in a statement of his circumstances to the society; and, after much shuffling, they made up the deficit, and voted to render the salary hereafter in semi-annual payments. So this matter was temporarily at rest.

Yet this was not the only source of disquiet. He was sensible of a widening distance between himself and his fellow-laborers, the deacons; — not that he had withdrawn from them, but they were pressing onward, with rapidly increasing momentum, toward the farthest verge of ultraism. They wished a separate organization for every department of moral effort. Mr. Vernon would have but one "monthly concert" of prayer; they insisted upon two. By giving their favorite continent its proper share in the exercises of each monthly gathering, he

staved off the matter for a while. But at length, finding the minister decided, they bolted, and set up an anti-slavery concert for themselves. Yet, they were not satisfied with independency. Their opposition began to manifest itself openly. Deacon Slocum was an outspoken man. He entered soon upon a tirade against the churches. He even advanced the doctrine that a minister's popularity with the world is in inverse proportion to his faithfulness; — then pointed to the fact that the young men of the village all liked Mr. Vernon.

On the other hand, the men of worldly influence in the church were increasingly sensitive, and fearful lest their minister was becoming a too ardent philanthropist.

The ungodly multitude laughed at the blind zeal of the agitators, and sneered at the religion of the opposite class, that permitted such selfish exactions, under the motto, "All 's fair in trade."

The *times*, moreover, were getting bad. It was rumored that money would soon be unprecedentedly scarce, and that a great commercial crisis must ensue. A leaden cloud seemed to overspread Mr. Vernon's horizon. In his own sanctuary of domestic love there were indeed sunshine and solace; yet even here intruded the disquieting thought that one dearer than himself was overtasked and fast losing her youthful bloom.

In his heart the day-star of Christian hope yet beamed, and the flame of Jesus' love glowed brightly. Yet this constraining love only seemed at times to intensify the painful consciousness that he was accomplishing little for the Master's cause. It was with a sad foreboding that he perceived his freedom in intellectual labor injuriously affected by these untoward things around him.

Mrs. Vernon was more cheerful. Not that she any the less appreciated their circumstances, but she guarded against despondency, that evil genius that once brooded with raven wing over their first home. She dreaded a return of those dark days, and strove to be happy, for her husband's as well as con-

science' sake. But there was an insidious influence, against which, not being forewarned, she was not forearmed. She had a quick sense of injustice, especially when one dear to her was the sufferer. Injuries that, falling on herself, would have been met with forgiving gentleness, when committed against her husband, roused her spirit to indignation, or transient resentment. A new acquaintance had no small share in developing these tendencies to mischief. This was no less a person than Mr. Clifton, — an ex-minister, who had lost his health, and with it lost his parish, and withal lost his voice, and so lost his profession. His father residing in the village, he naturally came home to recruit, and turn his thoughts to some new pursuit. He was a man of unusual talent, and its common accompaniment, excessive sensibility, and of much genial humor, originally; yet the world had not used him tenderly, and he owed it a slight grudge. Some men, of fair exterior, he had discerned to be whited sepulchres; so he suspected many to be such. He looked on the dark side of human nature, and drew the picture with graphic skill. Being quite at leisure, he was a frequent caller at the parsonage, where his conversational gifts made him a pleasant guest, though his wit was piquant, and his common vein sarcastic.

It was well for him that restored health and active toil in a lucrative profession did at length wear away the keen edge of his satirical temper, and induce a more genial flow of good-will and forbearance toward his kind. At this period, certainly he looked upon the world through a discolored medium; and, though he meant it not, his intercourse at the parsonage was among the bitter tributaries that helped to swell the uneven current of life in those eventful days.

In our narrative, thus far, we have made no reference to a diary; but let not the reader hence imagine that such a source of information has not been at hand. We hold that private journals, — records mainly of the interior life of the soul, — are mostly too sacred for the promiscuous eye. But there are, we

find, certain chapters, bearing date with the present epoch of this humble history, which seem peculiarly to belong to the public; and which may give a more vivid impression than our prosy statements, of the next few months at the parsonage. We open the diary near the beginning of the second year at Millville.

"*October.* — Snuggery, 9½ o'clock. Edward has gone to his father's. Ah! it is natural to write 'father's,' though that honored head lies low; and the spirit is with the just made perfect. I expected Edward home to-night; but, instead, a letter from him announces his purpose to leave the horse and carriage at Norfield, and return by public conveyance. He will come in the morning mail-coach from S.

"Ah! I shall miss the rides with Pompey, and so will the dear children. Little Allie, — he nestles now in the cradle by my side, as if there were some mysterious telegraph between my pen and his thought, — little Allie has learned to call 'Pom' already. It *is* a trial to have the horse go; yet how light compared with many other things! The Lord give us grace to bear all our trials meekly, as from his hand.

"*October.* — Evening again. It is the only time I get now to write. Edward has gone to his study for another hour. Mr. Wells has spent most of the evening with us. I dearly love the good, plain farmer; his call to-night has made my heart lighter. He proposes, as our horse is gone, and we have hay still at the barn, that we shall keep a cow. (Milk is five and six cents a quart now.) He has a fine heifer, which he offers us below the market price, and he bids Mr. Vernon be easy about the pay, — he can wait till spring. He and Edward had a long conversation upon society affairs; and afterward slid into a quiet, edifying talk upon practical godliness. For the moment, I forgot the din, and smoke, and hollow seemings of this factory-village, and had the old tranquil feeling as in the little back-parlor, at Salem, when a neighbor had stepped in for an

evening's converse. Presently, the bells rang, sending a quick pain to my heart, as the illusion was dispelled. I believe I *could* learn to love this place, if the people were more considerate toward their minister.

"*October.* — Deacon Slocum has seen Mr. Vernon to-day, and offered to let him a horse and wagon whenever he shall have occasion for them; he is obliged to keep a horse, and has not constant use for him. Edward consented, fearing he might be misconstrued, if he declined. I mentioned the circumstance to Mr. Clifton, and he shook his head. 'I perceive,' said I, 'that you think the deacon has some sinister end in view.' 'Why,' said he, 'the deacon is a fair man in his ordinary dealings; but he has a monomania, under which he may do some strange things. He is making no secret of his dislike of the minister; yet his talk is very specious. He told me, the other day, that the young men stood aloof from religion, and it was a pity they were not dealt more faithfully with, in the time of the revival; but the minister courts their favor.' I told Mr. Clifton that the deacon knew but little of Mr. Vernon's efforts with that class of our congregation. To which he replied: 'If Deacon Slocum wants to convert a man, he goes at him with a sledge-hammer, and knocks him down; if he get up, a rebel still, the deacon's conscience acquits him as having done *his* duty.'

"Oh, it is hard, after all Edward's toil and pains-taking, to be accused of unfaithfulness to souls! But let it pass.

"The month is just departing, and with it, the fourth year of our married life; — days of bliss that have sped on swift wing! — slow-footed hours of sorrow, few, yet well remembered! — tasks, whose reward was with them! — seed sown in tears, with long patience for the far-off reaping! — dear household joys, heart-communings! — heart-achings, too, from wounded sensibilities and o'er-fond affection! Yet, over all, nigh above, the rainbow of Christian hope, — beneath all, in the soul's depths, a well-spring of joy and peace untroubled,

springing up and oft overflowing. Blessed be our Rock, and let the God of our salvation be exalted.

"*November.* — Attended a wedding last evening, in one of our rich families. A little disappointed at the fee, — especially as the purse is, these many days, empty, — only *two* dollars! Tell it not in Gath!

"Mr. Clifton has been in, anxious to learn how much the richer we are for last night's service. I told him, 'though it would hardly enable us to buy a village lot on speculation, or make a bank deposit, yet, in the present state of the finances, it was not to be despised.' Then, I magnified the occasion; a large company; a splendid table; elegant service, and a half-dozen varieties of cake, with fruits and confectioneries; and I treated him to a lunch from a loaf of cake, whose heavy frosting was gemmed with golden stars, — gilt-paper ornaments.

"'Ah!' said he, laughingly, 'you may depend, they put all the gold on *the cake;* your husband did n't get over two dollars for marrying them.'

"I would not tell him he had guessed right. I am surprised at his knowledge of this people, and of human nature. But, poor man, he seems not very happy. I am sorry he is so reserved on the subject of the interior, higher life.

"*November.* — Thursday evening. Accompanied Mr. Vernon, last night, to the prayer-meeting. We hastened over, for fear the chair would be preöccupied, which, I knew, would spoil the meeting for me. Opportunity being given for the brethren to speak, Deacon Slocum made some remarks on the passage, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not,' &c.; which he interpreted to mean, 'all faithful Christians will be persecuted by the wicked;' and he prayed zealously for the martyr-spirit. I fear he knows little of the daily martyrdom of patience. Afterward, Mr. Vernon spoke again, showing the harmony between the passage just quoted, and such as these: — 'Commending ourselves by evil report, *and* by *good* report.' 'Be ye wise as serpents, &c.

'Let not your good be evil spoken of.' He closed by saying, in our circumstances it is not so important to inquire whether we could give our body to be burned, as, whether we daily exercise that charity without which we are nothing.

"To-day, in our little female praying circle, some allusion was made to last evening, when old Mrs. Slocum said, 'Mr. Vernon did n't seem quite to agree with Sydney. No one responded, and she added, 'Well, Sydney is a good man, — a praying man.'

"After meeting, she lingered to advise me about little Allie. He is teething, and very pale and fretful. She said he 'wanted air and exercise; it was n't well for so great a baby to be carried in arms so much; I must put him out of doors, and let him run.' 'Why,' said I, 'you forget, ma'am, he is only a year old, and does not walk yet.' But she insisted he ought to be put out o'doors every day of this fine Indian summer, and added, 'No wonder you are most worn out, and Miss Polly, too, lugging such a great child about.' I understand the secret now. Miss Polly has been making complaint. This is one of the *lesser* trials, which are becoming familiar to me. Would that I found it as easy to rise above some other annoyances, as I do those of this class.

"*November.* — Feel too tired and sleepy, my dear Journal, even to converse with you. I have only taken you up to whisper a word of complaint in your ear. Do you not know that I have neglected you entirely these three evenings? At the last meeting of the sewing society, Mrs. Elton asked me to take home some unfinished work, and complete it. This, I felt, was hardly kind; though a poor family needed the garments sadly. Mrs. Elton keeps a hired sempstress at home, and she knows my cares. I could not put by my own sewing, — the children were needing their winter flannels, — so I have set up late, and stitched till my eyes ached, and my fingers were a-weary. I began it grudgingly, I confess; but a better spirit came over me I trust, and I have tried to do it as unto the Lord.

"*November.* — Went to the woollen-factory boarding-house, and carried the garments to poor Mrs. T. She received them coolly. Mrs. Harris had prepared me to expect little else, by saying, in her distressed tone, 'They are an ungrateful set, but we must not see them suffer.' What was my surprise, then, after a few words of inquiry about her children, and sympathy for her troubles, to see the tears fall, and hear her say, passionately, 'O, ma'am, how good you are! Thank you, — thank you; — I don't mean for the things, — though Heaven knows we need them enough, — but for your kind words — the first that have gone to my heart this many a day. They 're worth more than the clothes. The other woman, there, that come in to ask if we needed help, did n't speak to me in this way; she faulted me in everything. Why did n't I keep my house cleaner? And why did n't I mend up the ragged children? And what for did I let 'em rove about on the Sabbath? And my husband, she said, 't was a wretched thing to have him go on so, — as if I don't know it, — and I must try to stop his drinking, — as if *I* could do it. And when she offered to fix some clothes for us, I knew I ought to be grateful; but, somehow, my heart ris right up, and I could n't thank her.' I have learned a lesson from this scene. The poor, however abject, crave sympathy.

"On my way home, I ran in a moment to see my old Scotch woman. Her room was as tidy as ever, and her heart as warm. I commended poor Mrs. T. to her attentions. 'Awcel,' said she, 'it 's nae so muckle good the holding forth will do the puir creatures, nor the alms; it 's the fellow-feeling that gaes to the heart.'

"*November.* — Mrs. Selden, it seems, had a select, social gathering to-day, and I was not invited. It troubles me very little. I should not have been aware of it, but for Mrs. Harris. She came in, supposing I was at the party, and it would be a good opportunity to see Mr. Vernon, and say some things she had long had on her mind I offered to call him, and she asked

why she might not step up to the study. On being consulted, Edward bade her come. She staid an hour, — going over, he told me, the subject of brother Sydney's grievances, in regard to the minister, and professing a desire to act the part of a mediator. She allowed her brother went too far. On the other hand, 'it was not strange that a young minister should be warped by the views of such men as Mr. Moulton, Mr. Elton, and others. Even Mrs. Elton confesses that her sympathies are more with the deacon, than she dare express openly. But Paul conferred not with flesh and blood,' &c., &c. She then asked Mr. Vernon if he would not preach upon the ten commandments. Also, if there could not something be done for our young men.

"Edward's manner toward her was very gallant and respectful. I wonder at his patience.

"Making her exit through the hall, she drew me toward her and whispered, 'I asked Mr. Vernon to preach on the commandments. Won't you tell him that a sermon, just now, on the *seventh*, would not come amiss? Some men, that stand high in the community, need a home-thrust on that subject.' 'Indeed!' I replied; when she offered to mention names and particulars; but I declined the information. She had an air of severe goodness and awful responsibility, as she might be an angel set to guard the decalogue. Ah, this sounds unkind! I fear I do not feel exactly right toward sister Rachel.

"*November.* — The people are beginning to think of their pew-rent; contriving, as usual, to pay in produce. Mr. Vernon says, if he could raise the money, he would give cash for everything he takes of the people, and put a stop to 'orders.' It is not in human nature not to take advantage of such a mode of payment. Mr. B. has been bringing wood all day, — three cords of maple, — for which he wanted an order of ten dollars, to cover his pew-rent. Mr. Clifton came over just at night, and walked around the wood-pile two or three times, before he came in. Mr. Vernon asked him if the sticks were not short for

three-feet wood. He curled his lip, and muttered, 'The knavish fellow!' Edward's eye asked an explanation. 'Why,' said he, 'the fact is just here; old B. has been getting a lot of three-feet wood for the cotton-mill, — twenty or thirty cords. Among it were some short, unmerchantable sticks, which were thrown out. He has made up your three cords from these odds and ends. He thought the minister would n't know the difference; and that is n't all, — Walter gave him but three dollars a cord, and he has charged you two shillings more, to make out his ten for the society.' Edward was silent, as he often is when troubled; and Mr. Clifton came out against the parish with his most caustic epithets. I told him he was too severe.

Well,' said he, 'pardon me, if you think so, and hereafter I will speak of them in the language of Scripture: "The best of them is as a briar; the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge."' I told him he was worse and worse; that there were many excellent people here, — the Wells' and Nortons' and Hines'. 'O,' said he, 'those are the hill folks, — very different people; but the new cloth on the old garment only makes the rent worse.' But the good women here, I added, the praying women, are the strength of the church. 'Yes,' said he, bitterly; 'Moulton and Co. are quite willing their wives should do the praying, if *they* may be allowed to make the money.'

"There is too much truth in this. O, why is our lot cast among such a people!

"*November* 30*th.* — Thanksgiving week has just closed. Edward struggled hard over his sermon. Monday, Mr. M. brought a load of hay, at the highest market price. It proves to be musty, damaged in the curing. He was anxious Mr. Vernon should not trouble himself to see to the unloading. *So goes our salary.* No wonder the poor minister found it hard to write a *Thanksgiving* sermon.

"We had very little sent in for our table; nothing like the liberal gifts of our old people. Mr. C. says, 'They are saving

themselves for a splendid manifestation at New-Years.' The snow being very deep, I rode home from church with good Mrs. Norton. She said something about my chicken-pie. I told her my chicken-pie, this year, would have to be an oyster soup. In her artless way she said, 'Have n't the village folks sent you in any chickens?' 'Yes,' said I; '*two*, but *they* are our *turkey*.' After she left me, her husband whipped up the horses, and in half an hour was back again at the gate, with a smoking-hot chicken-pie, which, he said, 'Mother did n't know, this morning, what she was making for. She had too much chicken for the large one, and so she took some of the good pieces and made a little one. She is so glad she did it, — only she would have made it larger if she had known it was for the minister's folks.' I was so childish as to shed tears over that little pie. My feelings were made very tender by the occasion. It was the first time since our marriage that we had kept 'the feast' alone. I was a little homesick. O! these way-marks in life are touching remembrancers of the past!

"*December*. — I have persuaded Edward to have a new overcoat. He hesitated long, and asked many questions about my wardrobe. It is the first time, he says, since he entered the ministry, that he did not feel able to purchase an article of clothing whenever he needed it. He says my cloak is quite as shabby as his outside garment. This is no news to me; yet his apparel is of more consequence than mine. Besides, I can turn my cloak, and have it nearly as bright as new. It was a part of my bridal outfit, and of the nicest quality. It was time for a new one last winter; but I was laid aside so early, and confined so much of the winter, that I postponed the purchase. It seems strange to me to deny myself — not luxuries; that I have often done — but comforts and even necessaries. Yet, an apostle took pleasure in necessities for Jesus' sake! O, for more of the apostolic spirit, — Christ in all things, and all for his sake!

"*December*. — Mrs. Elton called to say, if it was agreeable,

the people would make their donation visit at New-Year's, a week from to-day, afternoon and evening. She desired me to prepare nothing for the occasion, — they would take care of themselves. Our curiosity puts us on the '*qui vive*;' but a week is not long to wait.

"I put scissors to my old cloak to-day. Perhaps I may as well lay it aside now, till after New-Years'."

"*January 3d.* — The great event came off as was expected. It was really, in many respects, a handsome affair, with a good many curious incidents. Yesterday we computed the value of the gifts. Cash, fifteen dollars (the times are getting hard); staple articles, about twenty dollars; and other things, which Edward calls 'notions,' if estimated according to their actual cost, swell the whole to seventy-five dollars. Many of the latter are useful articles, and others ornamental. It is pleasant to have such things; but we could do very well without them. Still, we value them highly as gifts of friendship. We should look upon them with unmingled satisfaction, if our salary were promptly paid, and in a way to support us well. As it is, there is a drawback to our pleasure; for it is evident the people design this as an offset to the deficiency of our support. They are congratulating themselves and us on the result of the gathering. 'Seventy-five dollars! they ought to live now.' This I know is the feeling. As two beautiful China vases were presented, and placed on the parlor mantel, Mr. Clifton whispered me, 'They cost all of seven dollars; you will be able to live now.' However, it was a pleasant gathering, and furnishes materials for gratitude and joy. I must leave journalizing and write the particulars to father and sister Harriet."

From the letter here alluded to, and from other sources, we get so vivid an idea of the donation party, that we lay down the diary, and take up again the historian's pen, that the world may not lose the record of so bright a feature in "life at the parsonage."

It was New-Year's day, with a clear, frosty air and a fine snow-path. The inmates of the parsonage were astir at an early hour. "Miss Polly" moved energetically round, under an awful sense of responsibility. She had assisted Mrs. Smith on a similar occasion, and she gave significant hints of "such doings as would astonish Mrs. Vernon, if she never saw a donation party." Mrs. Vernon was not alarmed; but she looked on with a curious eye, as "Miss Polly" climbed to the top of the pantry, and, clearing off bottles and broken dishes, moved everything from the lower shelves, a peg higher; muttering all the while, that "they did n't build parsonage pantries larger, when they expected to have such times."

"You forget," said Mrs. Vernon, "that they would then be a world too wide for every day in the year but one."

This notable house-keeper had been scrubbing and scouring a week, but she still found more of the same kind to do. She was conscious that this was to be a great day in her domain. She said, "If there should be a cobweb left, Mrs. Martin would be sure to see it; or a grease spot, Dolly Goodyear would make it a town-talk."

Dinner was dispensed with; and, after an early lunch, extra fires were built; all superfluous articles, likely to be in the way, removed to the back chambers, the front passage to which was securely fastened. The children were dressed, and all was expectation.

Presently the "General's" man and boy came across with a basket of crockery, from the store; and Mrs. Moulton's colored girl was not far behind, on the same errand. Next came chairs, — two or three dozen. Then the first sleigh-load from the hill-side, followed quickly by another; and now the plot thickens. Cloaks and bonnets multiply in the dressing-rooms; baskets in the kitchen; horses in the carriage-room and wood-house; and the hum of voices, and the merry laugh, and the tramp of feet, are heard from parlor to kitchen.

Now, the mistress of the parsonage needs the gift of ubiquity.

She is wanted everywhere at once. Mr. Vernon meets the guests at the door; but, once past the threshold, all system is discarded. Some ascend to the chambers used as dressing-rooms, and return anon to be ushered into "presence" with all the formality of a fashionable party. Others, with baskets, budgets, packages in paper or napkin, proceed first to the kitchen with their precious freight. Hence, as Mrs. Vernon advances to greet a formal guest, some old lady, in cloak and hood, comes between them with her basket, and pushes the minister's wife before her to the kitchen, whispering her "sorrow that her biscuits should have burned a little on the bottom." As she is returning to those who still await her salutation, another good body pulls her by the sleeve into the bedroom, to present her gift of stocking-yarn; detaining her to open the package and explain that the crimson skein is for the children, and the blue for Mr. Vernon.

Soon there is an outcry for "Mrs. Vernon." She is wanted in the parlor. Answering the call, she finds a new group has arrived, between whom and the door Mr. Vernon is dividing his attentions. Scarcely has she bidden them welcome, ere she is summoned to the kitchen; and the ladies, perceiving the nature of the call, follow *en masse*. The General's man has come again,—this time with Mrs. Elton and her basket of provisions; her husband will not leave his business till a later hour. Everybody expects to look at what Mrs. Elton brings; and though she unloads the basket with a nonchalant air, she knows full well that many eyes are peering over her, and that every article will be duly chronicled. When the last biscuit is out, she takes the elegant damask cloth, and laying it carelessly on the table, says, "You may put my dishes, Polly, by themselves. The table-cloth you need not return to the basket; it is for Mrs. Vernon." There is no more to be seen, and the stream settles back again toward the parlor,—"Miss Polly" holding Mrs. Vernon by the sleeve to deliver some of the many messages with which she had been laden. Mrs. A. charged

her to tell that *she* brought this ball of butter; and Mrs. B. to apologize for her brittle frosting; and Mrs. C. to mention that this frozen spare-rib would need cooking soon, if there should come a thaw.

Meanwhile, a group of young ladies were busy with the children in the nursery, to which Allie's energetic calls of "Mama" soon brought her. Jennie Moulton had coaxed him to stay with her; but when one lady tried upon him a new apron, and another a sack, and a third tied a string of coral in his sleeve, the little fellow became alarmed, and rebelled against this mysterious kindness.

Not so his gentle sister. As one gift after another was lavished on her, her simple "Thank you, ma'am; 't is very pretty," was uttered with a self-possession and a grace that called forth many exclamations at her maturity."

"How quietly that child takes everything!" said Mrs. Walter; "my little girls would be in ecstasies.

By four o'clock the guests are all in; the pastor and his wife begin to breathe more freely, being at liberty now to "do the agreeable" in the way of social converse. No light task is it to promote ease and sociability among so numerous a company, from all classes in society, who meet in a social way but once a year, and whose extremes are rife, the one with cold exclusiveness, the other with rankling jealousy. Yet, so far as it can be done, our pastor and his wife are the persons to succeed. Polite to all, with a quick appreciation of the position of every guest, they were particularly careful to shield the sensibility of the humble, encourage the timid, and bring about pleasant greetings between those who seldom met on a common platform. With the best success, there would be some friction and a few heartburnings. The Seldens wondered Mrs. Vernon should think it needful to bestow so much attention on some kinds of people. And Mrs. Vernon was quite willing, if there must be fault-finding, that it should be at *that end* of the social scale

Another hour passes, and now there is a stir about the supper. A number of ladies volunteer to serve, and, with two or three at the helm, are under full sail for the kitchen and pantry. Mrs. Vernon follows, but is sent back with many mirthful protestations that she is quite in the way, and they cannot have her there. There is much haste and bustle, but the real progress is slow, there are so many consultations to be held, and various episodes enacted. "Shall coffee be made for the gentlemen? and, was this new article of chocolate designed for to-day? and, are those cold boiled meats to be served?" One "doubts," and another says "Yes," and another, still, "No, what do we want of meat?" And the last question is referred back to a committee of the whole. The murmur reaches the gentlemen, who are discussing the causes of the near commercial crisis, when Mr. Elton, whose "corporation" claims are not to be disputed, lays his hands, with mock solemnity, on his stomach, and says he "feels a great interest in the question the ladies are about to settle. A slice of cold ham, such hungry weather as this, is not to be despised."

Amid much merriment, the ladies return to cut up the ham and tongue. Behind the scene all sorts of feeling find expression, at the investigation of the materials for supper. "How beautiful!" and "How mean!" "I never saw the like!" and "I 'm heartily ashamed!" "'T was just like her!" "It 's as well as she knew how," &c. &c. Some of the edibles have a suspicious look, and are thrust aside into the closet. One whole basketful is pronounced unfit to appear; — they are put under a bread-bowl, that they may seem to have been overlooked. Nor is this the only "pious fraud" thought needful. Some things provoke mirth; others excite indignation. Mrs. Walter laughs till the tears stand on her fat little cheeks. Mrs. Norton's face burns with inward disquiet, that there are no more substantial gifts, foreseeing that, after two suppers, the larder will be lean.

When, at length, with the most skilful tactics, the provisions

were set forth, the first impression is that of *abundance;* the second, of *variety.* The collation, in its want of homogeneousness, not inaptly represented the parish. Here was a plate of generous biscuit, in reference to which, "the General," when asked to take another, said "One loaf of bread was all he needed at a meal." There, a plate of Liliputian size, sufficiently delicate for the lady that "once ate a pea." Between were all sorts and sizes, some well embrowned, and others pale as if the sun had not lighted on them, nor any heat. The cake, too! — none but a botanist could fail to wonder at the multitude of species under one genus. Here were loaf-cake and pound, fruit and sponge, silver-cake and gold, lemon and citron, — in pyramids, in circles, in squares and parallelograms, — some solid and spicy, others inflated to a rare size, yet found to be a tasteless puff; a few both rich and good. There were cookies in hearts, and oak-leaves, and diamonds; drop-cakes and jumbles; crullers and doughnuts. Butter was set on in various stamped balls, and an elaborate pine-apple pyramid, which, it was whispered, was merely on exhibition, and by no means to be meddled with.

The table *service* partook of the same motley character. Mrs. Vernon's fine porcelain was replaced in the closet as too choice for the liabilities of the occasion. The ladies who served the liquids had no nice bump of harmony. At first some order was observed; but, as demands multiplied, here was a large brown coffee-cup in a small white saucer, bearing half a pint of tea to some fashionable lady; there a tiny tea-cup, with chocolate or coffee, passed among the gentlemen. Mr. Elton confused the young girl that served him, by asking her to bring the second cup in her thimble. Plates, too, of all colors and sizes, indiscriminately distributed, gave a unique appearance to the various groups. But why weary further the reader's patience?

Supper ended, Mrs. Vernon was asked to play and sing; after which, the minister made, to the hushed throng, a brief,

pertinent address, suited to the festive occasion and the opening year, with a graceful acknowledgment of their timely gifts; then commended them in prayer to the God of all the families of the earth.

As the fathers and mothers left the parsonage, the moonlight fell on the cold snow, in striking contrast to the complacent, cheerful faces, that told of a warm glow at the heart.

But this was not the end. Other guests were expected in the evening, — among them the young men of the village, — and the girls waited to receive them. Part busied themselves in clearing away the tables; another circle surround the piano; while a dozen of the gayest, most restless spirits, set off on an exploring expedition through the house. Presently there was an irruption through the back chambers, and a game of romp up to the attic. Was not the house the property of the parish?

"You'll believe me now, Mrs. Vernon," said Miss Polly. "I told you what kind o' doings you might expect. Hear them girls, now! Some on 'em must ha' gone up the kitchen way, and unlocked that door. Here's Mr. Vernon. Now, if I was the minister, I 'd go up and give 'em a ra'al serious talk."

A sudden thought struck the minister, as the young girls' musical laugh rung down the passages. Said he, —

"Miss Polly, I thank you for the hint; I will go up immediately."

The young ladies in the kitchen looked troubled, but Mary's smile dispelled their fears.

As Mr. Vernon ascended the stairs, the girls, much abashed, retreated behind the chimneys, — all but Jennie Moulton, who was too self-possessed to run away.

"Ah! Miss Jennie," said he, "you have won the palm for bravery." The girls, reassured by his voice, ventured back. "Young ladies, you are suffering for want of exercise. Come, now," — taking down a swing from under the square roof, — "which of you shall I have the honor of swinging first?" The

young ladies looked doubtfully at each other. "What could it mean?" Jennie was soon seated, and, as she seemed to enjoy the amusement, others took courage and followed her, still watching the minister's face, that wore a grave, undefinable expression, though they were almost sure there was mischief in his eye. Half-shy, yet fascinated, they each took their turn at the swing. "And now," said he, "Miss Jennie, if they ask you about this, down stairs, you will tell them how well I have done my duty." Jennie thought she understood it now. He then asked them to his study, leading the way himself. Some of them shrank from entering. A minister's study, they thought, must be an awfully solemn place. He told them he hoped they were not afraid of him now; and again they caught that look, half-grave, half-humorous, which Fanny Elton afterwards declared was quite irresistible. So they followed him in, and he showed them some fine engravings, and they looked over the library till the twilight was gone, and their companions from below summoned them to the parlors. The girls pronounced this the best part of the visit. They had a new topic to talk about, — the gallantry of their grave young minister. Henceforth he was immortalized among them.

The little French clock struck twelve before Mary's head pressed the pillow, — the close of the most fatiguing day in all her past remembrance.

The next day little was done but to rest and reëxamine the gifts. As to provisions, the hundred and fifty guests had left many fragments, from which more than one poor family were bountifully regaled. So all that goodly *table* show left them no richer at the parsonage. But the hams of beef and pork, the butter, cheese and lard, the apples and potatoes, were as good as cash. The young men brought the money; there were various useful articles of apparel; a good store of groceries, and a fine assortment of writing-paper. But many of the gifts, though pleasant mementoes of affection, were, as Mary said, things they could do very well without. Yet they swelled the

estimate of substantial aid which the people took the credit of rendering to their minister. Let 's see: — there were materials, beautifully embroidered for three pairs of slippers; there were nearly twice that number of card-baskets, of various forms and fabrics; a beautiful papier-mache portfolio, and a port-monnaie to match; lamp-mats, crocheted and netted; three or four watch-receivers, and as many tidy-spreads; paper-folders, of pearl and ivory; pen-wipers and tablets; a set of nut-pickers; an expensive coffee-urn, and a silver fruit-knife; a solar lamp, and a book of splendid engravings. *If* they *can't live now!*

Before closing this chapter, we make a few more extracts from the diary.

"*Jan.* — Have received a long call from Mrs. Moulton. She talked very feelingly about our circumstances, and the expenses of living in Millville. I had my cloak spread upon the carpet, all turned and ready to be transformed into the style of the season. She advised me to put it together again without cutting, — it would be so nice to ride in, and every one needs a second best. I told her this must be my only outside garment for the winter. She said, 'No; I must go to the store with her, and select material for a new cloak. She would have brought it on the 1st, only she thought some one else might do the same.' How blest we are in such a friend! Her way of bestowing favors is so beautiful, — very different from Mrs. Elton's. *She* gives like a queen, — Mrs. Moulton like a mother or sister

"*Feb.* 1*st.* — An incident has occurred which tried me much. I have said some harsh things, — perhaps indulged a wrong spirit; but the provocation is great, and I find it difficult to analyze my emotions. Mr. Holcomb, a cabinet-maker, — a mercurial little man, and a member of our church, — has, it seems, a thievish cow, which he allows to prowl about the village, to the annoyance of those who keep open yard or stable. Having had supper repeatedly from Mr. Elton's meal-tubs, he threatened last week to impound her at the next trespass. It soon

occurred; and as the officer was escorting the offender to safe keeping, her owner appeared, and made a furious onset for her deliverance, — effecting which, he went off with flying colors. Mr. Elton followed, demanding the officer's fee, and forewarning him of the consequences of a refusal. Next morning, he received a writ, and, alarmed at the prospect of a lawsuit, he went first to Mr. Elton, then came to report him to the minister, declaring that he was persecuted because he was a poor man. Mr. Vernon reminded him he had just said the proceedings would be stopped, if he would pay the costs thus far, and advised him to do it without delay; thus avoiding the double evil of a needless waste of money, and the scandal of a lawsuit between brethren. But he was too angry for this, and declared he would not pay a cent till compelled to. One might as well have reasoned with a hurricane. He wanted the minister to compel 'the General,' to let him off. Edward went to Mr. Elton; he was inflexible. Holcomb had presumed on his too-easy nature, and the neighborhood would be glad to have him taught a lesson; yet, as he told him, if he would pay the costs (a dollar and a quarter), the thing should be settled. Entering Mr. Holcomb's, he found the wife in tears at the prospect of a loss which their scanty resources would not bear without diminishing their common comforts. She implored Mr. Vernon's help. Edward asked Mr. Holcomb how much he would give to settle it; he threw down twenty-five cents, saying that was all. Mr. Vernon took it, and, adding to it the only dollar he possessed, offered the sum to Mr. Elton, with the inquiry if that would stay proceedings. He said 'Yes,' and pocketed the money without further questions! This is enough to make one ashamed of human nature. I cannot think Edward was called upon to do it. Between a man worth his thousands, and a thankless madcap, his poor purse must be emptied, and a whole morning's study interrupted. I know his motive; but I think, as the lawyers say, 'It was travelling out of the record,' — loving his neighbor *better* than himself. He says, if the repu-

tation and peace of the church had not been involved he would not have done it. Both those men must have had their suspicion that the thing was settled at his expense, and they know his straitened circumstances. Oh! it is — but I forbear, my poor Journal, to inflict on you more bitter words.

"*February 28th.* — We had occasion for a new bedstead, which Mr. Vernon purchased of Taylor instead of Holcomb; the latter is so displeased at this, that he will not speak to his minister, or see him in the street. I said to Edward, 'Is this the fruit of your dollar?" He replied, with a meekness that touched me, 'I have had my reward.'

"*March 1st.* — Am sorry to add another cosmoramic view from the dark side of the landscape. Mr. D. (the bachelor) passed the door, and stopped to say that some time he would like an 'order' for those potatoes. He brought them last fall, — half-a-dozen bushels, — and declined a settlement for them then, saying 'It was no matter about it.' We thought he must intend them for a present. They were at that time twenty-five cents a bushel. Now, when he required the order, Mr. Vernon asked him for how much. 'O,' said he carelessly, 'it will be just three dollars, won't it? Potatoes are selling now for fifty cents a bushel.' Edward was confounded, and wrote the order without saying a word. It must have been a matter of calculation, as that just pays for his seat in church. It is a barefaced imposition, to which I told Edward he ought not to submit. Such things disturb my equanimity more than I should have once supposed possible. 'Let patience have her perfect work.' Alas! I sadly need to refortify myself at the celestial armory.

"*March 8th.* — The anniversary of my dear Carrie's death. It has been a sad day to me. Memory recalls all the past, connected with that precious name, — from my first glimpse of the childish face, so wondrously beautiful, to the last look beneath the coffin-lid. O, if this were *all!* — if there were no after-memories to trouble the clear fountain which death left so peaceful! How the heart longs, at times, for the quick

coming of that day which shall correct all misunderstandings between those who should be, and have been, allied in the closest bonds! My little Abby has been listening to the story of Carrie with an interest altogether beyond her infant years; and when she asked me, in her serious way, 'Why should you cry, mama, if Carrie was so good, and they wanted her in heaven?' my fond heart, for a moment, foreboded a sorer bereavement. 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained praise.'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Ah! storms and wintry weather
Are never absent long."

"What sect
Within the church, what party in the state,
Minutely in the parish imaged forth,
Shall find in him its ally?"

While our friends of the parsonage were nerving themselves to bear the thickening evils of their allotment, they were destined to receive a shock to their sensibilities from an unexpected quarter. We have already spoken of Mary's half-brother, Henry, the city merchant. Led by a gay and fashionable wife, his style of living subjected him to large expenditures, which, with some reverses in business, plunged him into embarrassments of the most threatening nature. In this emergency, he borrowed his father's credit to strengthen his own, and postpone the crisis by the aid of a few thousands, raised in Mayfield. He had then some faint hope of eventually extricating himself; but as this grew less, and his perplexity increased, an organic disease, which had been long lying in wait for him, suddenly put an end to his days; he died insolvent. The beautiful home in Mayfield would barely cover the amount in which Dr. Allison was holden for his son. In a letter to his daughter, among

other things he says: "The creditors are very considerate toward me, and will leave the place in my hands; but it is no longer mine. For myself, I am growing old, and shall soon need but a few feet of ground. Harriet has her portion from her mother unencumbered. For you, dear Mary, I had fondly dreamed to make comfortable provision, knowing how slender are the means of a minister's support. This hope is crossed. Well, — the Lord knows what is best, and he has, I trust, something in store for you, far better than perishable treasures. I rejoice that your heart is not set on these, my daughter. I thank God for the belief that his favor far transcends, in your regard, an earthly portion, — yea, that you are willing to forego any worldly good for the sake of Christ and souls. The discomforts of your present field of labor, it would seem, are increasing; but keep up heart, my dear girl; encourage your husband. The darker it grows without, the brighter keep the light on his domestic altar, — the light, not of human love only, but of heavenly hope, and Christian trust. Like the wise virgins, keep oil in reserve, ready for the neediest hour. O! why *should* we not take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing that we have another and an enduring inheritance?"

Mary felt deeply afflicted by these tidings. She felt for sister Ellen, widowed and childless and reduced to penury She sympathized deeply with her beloved and revered parent. She felt for herself as if a blow had unsettled the foundations of her earthly security. She knew not, till now, what a prop, amid their fluctuating circumstances, was the feeling that she had a father's house to fall back upon, whatever might betide.

The expiration of another half year at Millville was at hand. It was rumored that the society's treasury was yet empty. Mr. Vernon had been some time inclined to seek another field; yet he feared the reputation of restlessness and discontent. Should the society prove true to their recent engagement, he would try to hold on for the present, and outlive opposition. If not paid promptly, he resolved that the year

(ecclesiastical) should close his connection with that people With these explanations we resume our extracts from the Diary

"*March* 31*st.* — The last day of this month of gloom, — the saddest month to me of all the year. I would not, however, forget the *light* of that gloom, — a light not born of earth. Thanks for that light!

"Returned three days ago from Mayfield. Have received many calls; some of sympathy, — very precious; others of mere curiosity or cold formality. Our journey proved rather expensive; — the storm delayed us by the way one day and night at a public inn. The deacon charged by the mile for the days we travelled, and by the day for the time we rested; the two will make a large item in our bill of horse-hire. Mr. Clifton enlightened us on this subject; — Mr. Harris — simple-minded man! — had been heard to say that 'Brother Sydney charged the minister high, so as to help starve him out.' This is too bad to believe.

"*April* 2*d.* — Pay-day has come and gone, and the society is again fifty dollars in our debt; and, what is worse, if we had the money, it would not cancel *our* obligations. Edward has written to his brother to raise for him another hundred. I hope our place will soon be disposed of, and our debt extinguished. It is a miserable way of living; it troubles me, I think, more than Edward. He plunges into study and forgets it, — is laboring hard this week over his Fast-day sermon.

"*April* 10*th.* — The preaching, Friday, made quite a stir. Subject — The example of Christ as a citizen; text — 'Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.'

"Mr. Selden is much offended. He 'wishes ministers would preach the gospel, and let politics alone.' 'He is a large supporter,' Mr. Moulton says, 'and it would be well to conciliate him.' Mr. Moulton actually asked Mr. Vernon if he could n't give the subject of slavery the go-by in his future ministrations. He knows very well that Mr. Vernon is not delving at that sub-

ject all the while. He goes into it seldom; but when he does, he strikes a strong blow. Mr. Moulton admitted this, but said 'The *prayers* kept the wound fresh. If he could only omit it there, — if he would allow him to say to Mr. Selden that the minister had pledged himself.' I looked anxiously for Edward's reply. He was perfectly calm and courteous, yet there was that in his eye which might make the time-serving Christian quail. 'Ah!' said he, 'as to my *praying*, I can give no pledges. A believer's prayers, I presume we shall agree, are guided by the Divine Spirit, and I cannot tell, beforehand, what he may put in my heart to pray for.' With some apologies, Mr. Moulton departed, looking a little troubled.

"He had not been gone an hour, when the deacons called, — or, rather, *the* deacon and his shadow. He expressed his strong dissent from the doctrine of yesterday's discourse. The mercury was soon up at 'boiling point.' 'Talk about our duties to the state! We owe nothing to such a corrupt government as ours, but *revolution*.' He then stated the object of the call, namely, the appointment of a meeting to debate this matter before the public. Edward, of course, declined.

"'So, my dear, your views are opposed on both sides.'

"'Yes,' said he, 'ministers in my position on this subject — and there are not a few of us — find, as Richard Baxter said of himself, that we have two enemies where other men have but one. We are denounced from both extremes.'

"*May.* — A long call from Mrs. Harris. Did not let her go up to the study. 'She did not wish to dictate, but she *had* hoped the hint she gave Mr. Vernon would be improved. He really had no idea of the immoralities prevailing here.' She asked me to help form a Seventh Commandment Society, and circulate M'Dowall's Journal. I told her it did not strike me favorably; I would think more of the subject, and let her know the result. After her departure, I told Mr. Vernon; and he said, with a deprecating tone, 'O, sister Rachel! why wilt thou?'

"*June.* — The month of roses has come. Nature is very beautiful; the air is full of fragrance; the hill-sides are luxuriantly green, and this beauty is open to all. I was detained from church yesterday, all day, by illness. The factory children were lying in the meadows and roaming the fields from morn till night. Poor things! how my heart ached for them! Shut up and toiling all the week through a noise, and steam, and dust, no wonder they are glad to breathe the free air of heaven one long, bright day, in the open fields. If they could have two Sabbaths a week, one for the body and the other for the soul, there might be some hope of their spiritual culture. As it is, the effort is almost useless. Alas! there is wrong, somewhere.

"*July* 1*st.* — Mr. Vernon asked for money to-day, but the treasurer told the old story. His postage has run two quarters, and he has nothing to meet it. Little Abby brought me her gold piece, the last birthday gift from 'grandpa,' and asked if she might give it to papa. Precious child! Allie saw her; and, climbing to the shelf for his tin box of pennies, emptied them into my lap. I turned aside, and wept.

"*July.* — Have made, to-day, the acquaintance of Mr. Norton's sister, Aunt Hannah, about whom I have heard so much. She is a maiden of fifty; has been, as she says, in York state, visiting, the last year and a half. She is very fond of ministers, and of gossip, and of tea-drinkings. I suppose she will make the circuit of the village, and report herself often at the parsonage.

"*August.* — Everything looks toward the termination of our stay in Millville. Our salary drags heavily. Opposition is more manifest and decided. Edward begins to reel under his heavy burdens. Whatever comes, he is determined to sustain himself in the pulpit; but, a bill presented and urged, when the purse is empty, or a fresh attack from those who should be his fellow-laborers, sends him to his study with a heavy heart; and I often hear him pacing the room a long time before he resumes the pen. His late evenings, too, are

undermining his health. Then there are so many extras, that they have become 'ordinaries.' At first, his people encouraged him to preach and lecture abroad; latterly, they complain of it. Mrs. Elton told him the other day that 'there was a great field *here* for a minister. So much expected out of the pulpit, and the standard of preaching so high (!), she thought the places around should be more considerate than to call upon him so much.' I suspect Edward is a little too independent. Mr. Smith always consulted her about these things. When the money faileth, it is quite convenient to have the purse replenished by a lyceum lecture.

"*Evening.* — Since writing the above, a letter has arrived from a classmate of Mr. Vernon's in S., inquiring if he meditates leaving Millville, and saying the second church in S. would give him a call, if he were unsettled. This seems to be a critical juncture. The Lord direct us."

Mr. Vernon now resolved to close up his connection with his people, without much delay. While he was meditating in what shape to bring the matter before them, he received a hasty summons to Norfield on business of importance.

His brother James had long cherished a purpose to emigrate to the distant west, which was suddenly facilitated by an opportunity to sell the old farm and homestead. Edward's affairs were involved with his, and he had formed a plan to extricate them. The "barn hill lot" would a little more than redeem the notes held by Captain Newell. He proposed to appropriate it to this purpose, if Edward would take his namesake, now a fine boy in his tenth year, and fit him for college. The plan met with a warm approval.

James rejoiced to see his brother so hopeful in regard to the future, and encouraged him in his purpose to leave Millville.

"And now, dear Pompey," said Edward, "you and I will go home together." Master Eddie was to follow, as soon as the family were ready to start for Wisconsin, early in October.

Pompey was welcomed back with smiles and tears of joy. The children would not be satisfied till they had fairly hugged him round the neck. The event of his return made some talk in the village. What mine of gold had opened on the minister's path, that he should venture again on the old extravagance of keeping a horse!

The wonder was of short duration. The following Sabbath Mr. Vernon requested his people to unite with him in calling a council to dissolve his pastoral relation. The thing created a profound sensation. Mr. Moulton closely scrutinized the state of feeling in the community, and, with Mrs. Elton's help, decided what was for the good of the parish. An early meeting of the society was called; and, to Mr. Vernon's surprise, instead of acquiescing in his proposal, a committee was appointed to confer with him, and urge the withdrawal of his request. He consults the neighboring pastors, and they all advise him to stay. Ministerial brethren are not always the best advisers in such a case.

The final conference with the committee arrives. Mr. Moulton pleads that the step proposed will be the means of breaking up the society. He has found that Mr. Vernon is strongly intrenched in the affections of the middle class in his congregation. Mr. Wells, the Nortons, and others, threaten to go back to the old church over the hill. Mr. Moulton knows very well how much these men are worth, when money matters come to a pinch; and his foresight discovers narrow places ahead. They have already opened their purse, in the present distress. The committee are now able to promise immediate payment of all arrearages, and they make many pledges for the future. But the pastor hesitates. The want of Christian coöperation and fellowship is not so easily got over. He is not used to opposition in the *church*. Mr. Moulton takes him aside, and whispers that Deacon Slocum and his clique will probably leave soon, and join the Methodists. This, certainly, would be an alleviation. The committee say many pleasant things, and talk hopefully of the

future. He begins to yield. It *may* be *duty* to remain, though inclination and self-interest point to another head. Though loath to stay, he is not "fully persuaded" to go. The result is the withdrawal of his request. The committee look relieved and grateful. Their chairman makes out his report for the society, and begs Mr. Vernon to allow him to say that the tardiness with which the salary is rendered was the prime cause of dissatisfaction. In this request, the wily diplomatist has three objects in view, — he seldom had fewer than two in any movement, — to conciliate the opposition, of whose secession he had many fears, by covering up Mr. Vernon's estimation of them; to insure more prompt payment hereafter from the pew-holders; to gratify the honest farmers with the belief that their contribution had met the difficulty, and retained the minister.

And now it is reported, far and near, that the affair is happily adjusted. The minister soon has reason to think otherwise. He finds that the society has made no provision for the future. Their spasmodic effort will only sink them the deeper in the slough. As for the secession to the Methodists, it was only the figment of Mrs. Elton's busy brain, which her best efforts were never likely to place among the actualities of history. It took an incredibly short time to open Mr Vernon's eyes to all this; and he said to Mary, "I have acted very unwisely. We have lost the opportunity of an eligible place, and I foresee plainly we shall not stay in Millville another twelvemonth."

The traveller, who is half-convinced that, at an important stage of his journey, he took the wrong road, loses soon his elasticity of step and ardor of pursuit. So a man, haunted by the conviction that some important step in life was wrongly decided, is shorn of half his strength by misgivings and regrets. Soon as Edward Vernon was satisfied of his mistake in consenting to retain his present charge, a feeling of despondency crept over him, which unnerved him for strong persistent effort. The evils, from which he had vainly sought release

looked intolerable. His brooding thoughts augured loss of reputation and strength, — prophecies of evil that were their own means of fulfilment.

For a few weeks there seemed to be a cessation of hostilities on the part of his opposers. Deacon Slocum had little opportunity now to aid in cutting off the supplies, — his exorbitant bill for horse-hire being paid, and his accommodations relinquished. At twelve and a half cents a mile for horse and carriage, he had made up a bill of seventy dollars, in a little less than twelve months. It was evident he had no idea of being shoved off from the religious connection in which he could agitate with such notoriety and effect. Indeed, we must give him the credit, at this time, of an effort to draw once more in the same harness with the minister. Some attributed this mollification to the influence of his brother's widow, a woman of a heavenly temper, who had come to pass her last days with her husband's kindred. Be this as it may, the reform was of short continuance. Always restless and in search of novelties, he wearied his pastor with his Quixotic schemes. Among other things, he solicited Mr. Vernon's signature to a pledge for the better observance of the Sabbath, which he proposed to circulate; and was curtly answered that we had better have a pledge to keep the church covenant.

This was taken hardly. Soon after, a proposal to invite a celebrated anti-church apostle of liberty to hold forth in the village, being also negatived, the deacon "declared off" from the minister, irrevocably. His wife, too, withdrew from the female prayer-meeting, — "not that she had aught against Mrs. Vernon, — she considered her a superior woman, — but she could not uphold an unfaithful ministry." Her place was more than supplied by the sister-in-law, Mrs. Mills, between whom and Mrs. Vernon there was all the sympathy of kindred souls. Poor Mrs. Harris was in a state of betweenity, which made her look more distressed and under greater responsibilities than ever. One might have judged, from her phiz, that the ark of

the Lord rested on her shoulders, and that she was chief mourner in all the separate ills of a groaning world. Sister Rachel thought it her duty not to desert the camp; and her prayers for her pastor evinced the purpose to inform her praying associates, as well as the Lord, what she deemed his errors and deficiencies. To his sensitive wife this course was not a little annoying.

Mother Slocum, too, was not inactive. With her bag on her arm she sallied forth, retailing the gossip obtained from Miss Polly, to the disadvantage of the pastor's family, seldom failing to exalt her son, in the stereotyped phrase, "Sydney is a good man, — a praying man."

Mr. Vernon's *power* in the *pulpit* had been the prop that hitherto strengthened him against adverse influences. Now, that power began to wane. Yet, there was many an effort to recover what was lost. Whenever he could confine his attention to some glorious truth of Revelation, how did it calm his disquietude, chasten and elevate his thoughts, chain his affection, fill and enlarge his vision, and raise him, in blissful forgetfulness of his trials, to an atmosphere of its own, clear and invigorating! Then, he would write and speak like himself. But such occasions were fast becoming rare.

The people were quick to note the change in the pulpit, — a change affecting quite as much the address of the preacher as the character of his discourses. There were none here to pet him in his moods, to pity his depression, and hold him all the dearer for it, as did the people of his first love.

When Mrs. Elton was reported to have said, "she could n't divine what ailed Mr. Vernon, to depreciate so rapidly in his preaching," Mary's cheek flushed, and her heart ached, as that of a minister's wife only can, in such circumstances. Poor woman! she had care enough, it would seem, without this trouble. Her domestic duties were not light. Young Edward had arrived, as was expected, making one more object of her provident attention. Miss Polly had fixed notions of her own

sphere of service, and beyond the line she would not budge an inch, let what would happen. With Mary's views of a mother's duties, her two children made no small demand upon her time and energies. But it was the miscellaneous services of a parochial nature that overtasked and crowded her. Her benevolent heart could not resist the appeals of misery and want. Among the poor were many who had seen better days, and who craved a sympathy and appreciation which there were few to bestow. The Seldens thought it very unbecoming in *their* minister's wife to associate with the poor old Scotch woman, or to sit an hour with the suffering Mrs. Ellis, whose daughter worked in the cotton-mill, and whose husband, in his drinking sprees, wasted the girl's earnings with his own. Mrs. Beach and Susan were, indeed, a more reputable family; yet they lived in a factory boarding-house, and the daughter worked in the packing-room of the paper-mill. How vulgar in Mrs. Vernon to be on visiting terms with such people! These aristocrats saw no harm in her taking home the unfinished work of the sewing circle, or in taxing her time and strength to receive calls and visits, and attend social gatherings.

Mary had felt, from the first, that there were a multitude of claims upon her; but now it seemed that everything would be light, were it not for the incubus settling down, with leaden weight, on her beloved and gifted husband.

Everything that she could do was done; — her most assiduous ministries employed in his behalf. Life seemed an intense effort to shield, to soothe, to stimulate, to aid, to inspire with hope and courage, the struggling victim of despondency. When he went to the study with a heavier cloud than usual upon his brow, she would slip away from her cares below, and, tapping at his door, ask to sit awhile with him. He knew not how much he was indebted to those visits for what he did accomplish. A cheerful countenance doeth good, like a medicine. His malady was not wholly proof against this remedy.

At first, she playfully asked him what text he was writing

from, and what he could find to say upon it. When she found that he was thus led away from himself, till his enthusiasm kindled, and his mind glowed on some track of lofty thought, she resorted, often, to this expedient. Nor was this communion upon pulpit themes without a *reciprocal* profit. While to him it was stimulating, and often highly suggestive, to her it was a sweet privilege, and a rich intellectual repast.

Little Abby was always ready to amuse her brother, while mama could go to the study. Catching her mother's spirit, she would do anything "to comfort dear papa."

"What shall I do, when you are laid aside?" said Edward, pensively. "Ah! that is selfish. You do far more for me than I deserve."

"That sounds very humble," replied Mary. "Can this be the same gentleman who, an hour ago, claimed the honor of having sprung a splendid mine of thought?"

"Ah!" said he, "the mines of *Golconda* were of little worth to their owner, without being *wrought*."

Surely, surely; and how is a man in the night-mare to use a pickaxe? — there 's the rub.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"A something light as air, a look,
A word unkind, or wrongly taken."

"The vale may be deep, but there 's music around it,
And hope, 'mid our anguish, bright hope still is here."

Life, out of the parsonage, is not smooth at Millville, in these days. It is a time of trouble and perplexity. Business failures through the country are disastrously frequent, and the scarcity of money is increasing. The Millville manufacturers curtail their operations, and struggle hard to keep their heads

out of water. Much suffering ensues from the dismissal of operatives. It is the season, moreover, when fevers prevail in those low, unhealthy grounds, and distressing cases of sickness add to the general confusion. The pastor is called to many sick beds and many funerals

His family expenses, too are now multiplying. He has physicians' and nurses' bills. We follow him into the nursery, one Sabbath afternoon. A tiny babe, two weeks old, the second daughter, lies in the cradle. The nurse is at her supper. He draws aside the curtain, that he may look over the Herald, and prepare for the missionary concert. "Ah, Mary!" said he, "I miss you here, as well as everywhere else." She was wont, during the month, to cull many a missionary item, and treasure it up for him. She made an effort now to explore the monthly concert department of her brain. Her husband bethought himself, and said, "This is hurting you, my dear, and I ought not to have allowed it."

"O, no!" said the devoted wife; "I am so glad to do something for you, as I used to. Now let me look out the hymns." The nurse came in, and prohibited the book, just as the task was done. As Edward started for the evening service, he noticed a bright spot on either cheek, and, turning back, cautioned Mary to be quiet, and rest.

But when is a minister's wife sure of rest? Intent on a kind service, Aunt Hannah stepped in, thinking, by this time, Mrs. Vernon would be glad to see somebody. The nurse caught at the opportunity to ask leave of absence, for an hour. Aunt Hannah did not mean to tire the sick woman, so she did all the talking herself; and she had many things to say. Mrs. Vernon did not mind it much, till a theme was reached upon which she was rather sensitive.

"I have spent the Sabbath at Mrs. Clifton's," said the visitor, "and the young man has had quite a talk with me about parish matters. I wonder he should think Mr. Vernon was foolish to remain here."

"Did he say that?" asked the now eager listener.

"Yes," was the reply; "and I didn't know, till he told me, that Mrs. Elton is making complaints of the preaching. *She* does n't give up a minister till the last. Moulton, too, he says, would as lief have him go as stay, only he feared the society would run down. They are an ungrateful set, here. The way they treated Mr. Smith, now, — I always loved Mr. Smith, — they fairly kicked him out, after all he'd done, too."

Thankful was the excited invalid to hear the nurse's returning steps. But no sooner did Aunt Hannah leave, than, meeting being out, Mrs. Harris "just stepped in, a minute." Being in, she took the opportunity to tell how fast objects of charity were accumulating in the village; and she leaned against the bedpost, and gave the particulars of three half-starved families, that had lately come to light. This reminded her, also, to speak of half-a-dozen poor children, that must be clothed and got into the Sabbath-school.

When Mr. Vernon entered, he found his wife in a high fever. Dr. Gale was summoned, and, for the first time, expressed alarm, and asked for counsel. A messenger, with the sorrowful tidings, was despatched to Mayfield. For three days, the scales of life and death seemed to hang in even balance. Poor Edward! he thought he had trouble before; but what sorrow was like this? Yet the Lord in mercy spared him the stroke that would have made his babes motherless, and widowed his heart forever.

Though soon out of immediate danger, Mary's illness was long and heart-trying. She gained, at times, rapidly; but every betterment was followed by a relapse. The people, at first, were attentive and sympathizing. Watchers and nurses were obtained with little difficulty. Soon, however, they wearied of it. The world has far less sympathy with a case of protracted debility than with one of brief acute suffering. Mr. Vernon's sensitive spirit shrinking from reluctant service, he often studied his sermon while tending the sick-couch the

livelong night. Those were dark days, at the parsonage; yet there shot athwart them a light that was not born of sun or star, — many a gleam, and all the more precious for the darkness they illumed.

Winter set in, — a winter of unusual severity. The domestic affairs of the parsonage missed the careful supervision of other days. The purse was soon empty, and money was nowhere to be had. Mary denied herself many little comforts, which could not well be procured on credit.

Mr. Vernon waited anxiously for his house-rent, but it did not come. Presently a letter from Mr. Cook announces that the debtor is a defaulter, and has run away. A journey to Salem must be made, to secure the claim, and public conveyances demand cash, and the purse is empty. He must take Pompey, though it is a long road, and the weather cold. Yet he will need a little "change," for turnpike-tolls and horse-feed. He applies to the society's treasury in vain. He calls on one and another rich man, with no better success. He sets off, at length, on his journey, resolving to call on a wealthy parishioner, a mile and a half on his way. He is again denied, and, stung to the quick, will not retrace his steps, though without a penny. At the gates he promises to pay on his return. He is thought to be a civil-spoken man, and they let him pass. Night overtakes him, but he has no means to procure shelter; so he presses on, nor slackens rein till, at midnight, he reaches father Allison's door. The next morning, supplied with enough filthy lucre for the present distress, he pursues his course, and, on the fourth day, reaches home again, dispirited by a bootless journey. Real estate has fallen in Salem, as elsewhere, and his house is destined to remain, for the present, unsold and tenantless.

Not many days elapsed ere Mary received a letter from her father, suggesting, in the tenderest, most delicate manner, that her dear husband is in danger of becoming misanthropic; with an earnest caution to guard against the least sourness, or bitterness of feeling. "To avoid this," he said, "requires more

grace than they are aware who have never met the temptation: yet it can be done, and, by divine grace, it must be done, or we make ourselves miserable, and give a poor illustration of the religion of the Cross." These words awoke Mary, at once, to a conviction of the danger alluded to, — to the fact, moreover, that she was accessory to it. Shall she tell Edward? He may be grieved; yet, like a true wife, she resolves to show him the letter. Together they analyze their thoughts and feelings, make mutual confessions of wrong, pledge renewed watchfulness, and beseech the Lord for strength to bear meekly and without harsh judgments the ills that come upon them by the fault of others.

A letter, written by Mary to her brother, in these days, is too characteristic to be omitted.

"MILLVILLE, &c.

"MY PRECIOUS BROTHER, —

"Your last package from home brought you the intelligence of my dangerous illness and partial convalescence. I know you will rejoice to see again the familiar hand, and be assured, from my own pen, of returning health and vigor. Ah! let me not deceive you by that word vigor. I know little, yet, of such a luxury. I have so much demand upon my strength that it is used a little faster than I gain it. (Is that an Irish-ism?) I have three dear babes leaning upon me; and a husband, with a nature as sensitive as a child's, — if he were otherwise, I could not love him half as well, — in special need of sympathy and comfort. The claims made upon me, too, from without, as the pastor's wife, are neither few nor light. Sister Emily, in her sphere, knows little of these. Edward has written you of his trials here. I have felt them deeply, for his sake, — felt them with a bitterness of spirit that I knew not of, till the solemnities of eternity seemed but a step removed. A near prospect of death is a wonderful revealer of the heart.

"O, my dear William! would that I could lean my head on your strong arm, and recount the sorrows and joys that have

been my lot since we looked upon each other last. You have been sick once and again, but I believe were never brought so low as to abandon hope of life. Such an event is a solemn crisis in one's history; like a bridge connecting subsequent life, as a separate portion, with what has gone before. As death seemed approaching, my soul rallied with a wondrous energy, to settle anew the foundations of its Christian hope, and looked forward, with trembling solicitude, toward the end. Soon I was too weak to reason, — almost too low to think. Yet consciousness remained; everything seemed detached and moving; everything but *one*, — the Saviour's bosom, — and on that I leaned as an unreasoning babe on its mother's arm. Hour after hour passed, and I lost the power of connected thought. I saw, indeed, and knew the faces that bent over me; — our kind, anxious father, with his finger upon my wrist; sister Harriet, in tears; dear Edward, pale and fixed as marble; little Abby's sweet, earnest face in the nurse's arms. I saw but I knew not the how and wherefore. All was vague and dreamy, all but that sure support beneath me, on which I rested in perfect peace. (O, to be certain that this was no illusion of the fancy!) Then the crisis passed; and still, too feeble to talk, — almost too weak to think, — I lay in a state of untroubled passivity, with a delicious sense of new life in the slowly quickening tide through heart and veins. After a few days, I gained rapidly; but many things have since conspired to prevent my full recovery. Yet how much have I to be thankful for! My song shall be of mercy, not of judgment.

"We hear of you in the public journals, and rejoice in the growing spirit of inquiry among the Armenians of your charge. Hope you may be permitted not only to sow, but to reap. What joy is like the joy of harvest, after a seed-time of clouds and tears?

"You asked me, in your last, to say more of my children. Ah! what fond mother shall dare give her pen '*carte blanche*,' on a topic so near her heart, and so exhaustless? Abby, we

humbly trust, is in favor with God. She is a tender-hearted, spiritually-minded child; holding daily communion with Jesus, whom she has loved from her earliest knowledge of his name. Divine grace seems to have renewed her unto holiness soon after she knew the difference between right and wrong. This was what I expected when I consecrated her in baptism; and the Lord has not disappointed me. 'According to your faith be it unto you.' Allison is a fine boy; less contemplative in his turn, but much like his sister in many things. He is rightly named, for he belongs to my side of the house, — dark hair and hazel eyes. The baby — little Nell — is named for brother Henry's wife. She is very different from the other children; more lively in her baby ways; more irritable, too, than they. The Lord make all the darlings — yours and ours — lambs of the Saviour's flock, carried in the arms of the good Shepherd, and borne in his bosom!

"Besides our own, we have the care and training of a son of Edward's brother, who was named for his Uncle Edward. He is a lad of much promise; yet high-spirited, and needing the most judicious management. I sometimes call him my eldest son. He gives me most gratifying proofs of affection, and is quite docile in my hands.

"I had much more to say to you, dear brother, and designed to fill another sheet, but my failing strength warns me to desist; — will if possible fill out a page for sister Emily, and add another line here before I send."

But it was not possible. Again was the easy rocker exchanged for the bed of pain and languishing. The people became impatient, and some thought the minister's wife did not try to get well. Miss Polly aided this slander. She "could n't see any reason why she should not get up;" and, indeed, it was beyond her ken.

Mrs. Elton said "she was sorry for Mr. Vernon. No wonder he could not sustain himself in the pulpit with so much sick-

ness in his family. A minister with such a feeble, nervous wife, was to be pitied."

Ah! how little did she know about it! How little guess that but for those feeble arms around him, he would have sunk like a millstone to the nether depths! Less, still, did she surmise that much of this debility, and these frequent relapses, arose from her constant thoughtfulness of him and his work.

There was much meddling, in those days, with affairs at the parsonage. Many thought 't was time things were looked into. Among others, Mrs. Deacon Nobles came, and, after a conference in the kitchen, went in to talk with Mrs. Vernon. She intimated that, in consequence of her illness, the minister was confined at home, and things were getting loose in the parish. "It was very bad, very unfortunate, indeed!" Mrs. Vernon joined in her regrets, saying, "It was not very pleasant to her to be sick; yet, she was sure she sorrowed more on Mr. Vernon's account, than on her own." The unfeeling rejoinder was. "The people are sorry *on their own account*. We hope, for our sake, you will try to get up soon."

Dr. Gale entered, as the deacon's wife departed. Finding his patient in tears, he turned abruptly back to the kitchen, and ordered Polly to "call the parson." A rough man was Dr. Gale; tempestuous often, yet sensible. Christian principles he did not profess; but humane feeling he seldom lacked.

"Parson Vernon!" said he, "I give it up. You may get your wife home to her father's as soon as possible, if you mean to have her well. *I* can't cure her *here*. Your religious folks ha' n't a grain of sense to spare. A pretty fool I make of myself, to come here and order sedatives, and rely on quiet, when some old woman, who was made without nerves, will bolt in, and upset it all!" And the doctor went off in a bluster.

Mrs. Nobles had stopped to report her interview to Mrs. Elton, and the two ladies stood at the gate as the doctor returned with quickened step. They stopped him to ask if

there was anything more alarming at the parsonage. He growled a "no need of anything more," which they construed into vexation with his patient. Whereupon, they proceeded to lament that ministers should take for their wives, such feeble, inefficient women; and, especially, that Millville should be so unfortunate in this respect.

The doctor was in no gentle mood, and he gave them a blast which they were sorry to have provoked.

"Feeble women!" said he; "feeble women! What makes 'em so? They 've a right to be feeble, with a vengeance! Wonder any of 'em live ten years, — pulled about hither and thither, and kept on short allowance! You expect to make her do half enough to earn her husband's salary, with your confounded societies! It 's contrive, and cut, and stitch; and then you set her to praying, and talking, and reforming; and she must be dragged out here and there; and at home, there 's no peace for the calls and tea-drinkings, to say nothing of the fault-findings. Mrs. Vernon, now, is not inclined to be sickly. Good, fresh constitution; but she 's worn and low, and you don't give her any chance to get up."

"But," interposed Mrs. Nobles, "you 'll allow, doctor, that Mrs. Vernon is very nervous?"

"Nervous!" said he, contemptuously. "I wish the women knew what they mean by that."

Mrs. Elton ventured, "If she had more hopefulness and courage, doctor."

"You don't know her," said the doctor, less fiercely. "She 's none of your milk-and-water ladies. She has all the hope and courage there is in the house;" — and he turned away. Looking back, however, with a sudden thought, another explosive burst of words followed. "If I 'd been a minister (*no danger*), but if I had, I 'd ha' lived a bachelor all my days, before I 'd ha' married a wife for the parish!"

Dr Gale's last prescription at the parsonage was followed, and proved highly efficacious. In the home of her childhood,

amid the tender assiduities of father and sister, the two little ones with her, and away from the friction of life in Millville, Mary was restored, not to her former soundness, but to comfortable health and activity. Aunt Hannah volunteered to take the helm at the parsonage. Abby went to school with her cousin Edward, and though her little heart pined for mama, she made no complaints, but did her best to be a comfort to her poor father. Now, so far as family cares were concerned, the pastor had ample leisure to study, those six long weeks; yet he accomplished far less even than when he had "a feeble, nervous wife upon his hands." His soul fretted like a pinioned giant.

He borrowed money till he was ashamed to ask, and, indeed, unable to procure more. Mr. Moulton lent him his name at the bank, for thirty days; and when their expiration found him still in straits, renewed the loan for thirty more. At the end of sixty days, however, he was no better off than before. He ran hither and thither without success. His three days of grace were nearly out. Prayer seemed the only resort left him. Relief came from an unexpected source.

Susan Beach had earned large wages at the paper-mill From her last year's income, she had supported her feeble mother, and saved fifty dollars, which she kept by her, in gold, fearing to invest it, in a time of general insecurity. Soon as she heard of Mr. Vernon's extremity, she asked her mother to take the five eagles to the parsonage, and beg him to accept the loan, without interest, till it should be perfectly convenient to refund it. This was indeed a God-send. The coin was wrapped in a piece of writing-paper, on the inside of which was traced by the widowed mother, in a tremulous hand, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and *verily thou shalt be fed.*"

How tender were the hearts from which ascended devout thanksgivings for this timely aid!

Mr. Clifton had learned their straits, and called to see what could be done. As he heard whence relief came, he said, bit-

terly, "That is ever the way;—the poor widow's mite; the penitent outcast's box of ointment. Walter has money by him,—enough of it; but he would sooner see his minister arrested for debt, than run any risk of losing fifty dollars."

Mr. Clifton always had an irritating-plaster for every sore Why must he needs apply the caustic just as heavenly balm was distilling on the wounded heart? It was his besetting sin. So, now, he added, that Slocum had been heard to say to his brother deacon, "Hold on a few months more; the minister won't stay long after the bread-and-butter fails." Then he indulged in a strain of bitter humor on the evils of poverty; said it made a man mean to be compelled to such shifts and turns, in order to live; *he* had lost his self-respect, only from debating the question, when his study-fire was low, whether he should afford two sticks of seasoned hickory, or try to keep warm with one. He tried an agency a few weeks, and that made him feel meaner yet; to go cringing and bowing in at people's back-doors, or following them to the fields, standing half an hour, while some boorish man hoed hill after hill of corn or potatoes, before he could stop to give him a civil answer. "On the whole," said he, "much as I grieved to abandon my profession, I am quite reconciled to it now."

Mary felt that there was a better view of the matter than this. She did not endorse his sentiments; yet his words rankled in her heart.

Children's words often reveal the public sentiment around them. One day, Edward came home from school with his gentle cousin, his face flushed and his dark eye flashing unwonted fire. Mrs. Vernon heard Abby say—

"Yes, Eddie, dear, we ought to tell mama; she will know in a minute if you were right."

"What is it, Eddie?" said his aunt.

"Abby may tell," said he; and he stood, half-proudly, half-abashed, twirling his cap by the tassel, while that sweet voice rehearsed the story thus:

"We were coming from school, mama, and Annette Selden said my new bonnet was nothing to be proud of; Mary Moulton wore it all last winter, and, — you will not feel bad, will you, mama? — she said my father was too poor to buy me a decent bonnet, and so Mary's mother took pity on me, and gave me her old one."

Eddie watched his aunt's face, over which passed a sudden flush. "And what did you say to this, my darling?"

"*I* did n't say anything;" and she looked at Eddie anxiously.

"*I* did," said the ingenuous boy. "She is a mean-spirited girl, and I told her so. I told her I could protect my cousin against her insults, and that it was no crime to be poor. Besides that, my uncle no need to be poor unless he had chosen to be a minister; he could have earned as much money as her father, if he had set out for it; and, if there was any disgrace, it belonged to her father, and the rest of the people here, that did n't pay him any better. And when she made up faces at me, I told her, for all her fine feathers, she was no lady."

"O, Edward!" said his aunt, sorrowfully, "that was wrong."

"So cousin Abby said; but I think the haughty girl deserved it; — a great girl, older than I am, teasing a little child!"

A sweet voice replied, — "We must not do to those that trouble us as they deserve, must we, mama? That is not the way Jesus does by us. I know cousin Eddie did it for me;" and, putting her arms around his neck, she kissed him, and then made him sit down, while mama talked of the Bible-way to treat those that use us ill. As the supper-bell rang, and Eddie went to hang up his cap, he said, between a smile and a tear, "I never expect to be as good as cousin Abby."

About this time, we find the following entry in the Diary:

"*February* 25. — A mild, spring-like day. Mrs. Ellis sent to inquire if I felt able to step over to her room. I found her

very feeble; she can scarcely last another month; — the wreck of a noble woman. Our interview was very affecting. Her husband is off on one of his drinking sprees; has scarcely been sober since he was dismissed from the paper-mill; is always worse when out of work. Poor woman! She wanted to express her gratitude for all I had done for her, and ask one more favor. It stirred my heart with a grateful joy, which is a rich reward, to hear her say, 'How can I thank you enough for what you have done for me! — not for my bodily comfort, — though I appreciate that, — but for my soul; for my larger views of Providence; my closer reliance on God; my livelier sense of the sympathy of Christ. O, how much nearer my Saviour's bosom have you led me! And now I have a dying request. My child! what will become of her when I am gone? I have been thinking and praying over it, — and it is a great thing to ask, yet the Lord seemed to put it into my heart, — will you take Mabel and bring her up? She is thirteen now, and, in two or three years, will be able, perhaps, to do your work. She is just the age to need a mother. If she were provided for, I could die in peace.'

"This was a strong appeal. I talked and wept with the poor woman. She asked me to pray with her, and I could not refuse. I promised to confer with Mr. Vernon about her request; and, if it were possible, we would take charge of the child.

"It would be a great care for me, — to correct and instruct, yet I like the appearance of the girl. But just now, when we are so straitened to live. Miss Polly, too, will doubtless object. Yet, what an opportunity to do good! and what are our professions worth, if we are not willing to be at pains, and deny ourselves for the sake of others?

"——Edward leaves the decision with me. I resolve to let her come; the Lord will provide.

"*March* 1. — I used to think I had some equanimity of temper; yet I seem to be losing it fast. If we remain here

much longer, fear I shall become impatient and irritable. I am alarmed and humbled. An incident occurred to-day, which I cannot recall without a fresh ebullition of indignant feeling. Is it best, then, to record it? I will school my heart till I can do it with Christian meekness, more in sorrow than in anger.

"A load of ornamental trees has been brought, it seems, to the village for sale. Mr. Vernon was passing down the street, when Mr. Walter called him to the wagon, and told him here was a good opportunity to fill up the broken row in front of the parsonage. Edward had done it once, but they would not grow in the poor soil, which was made from the cellar. He told Mr. Walter he would assist in putting down the trees, when the spring should open, if they thought best to purchase some. To his surprise, the man coolly replied, 'O, the society would n't think it *their* business! We expect the minister to do such things.' Edward waived that point, and replied that his purse was low; he could not go into the thing very extensively. Mr. Walter began to speak more positively; — said 'he was sorry to see the parsonage running down. Mr. Smith took great pains with the fruit and shrubbery. The peach trees had been left to run out; and the grape-vines were all dead, but one, south of the house, and *that* ought to have a trellis to cover both windows. As for the trees in front, there *must* be another fir to match the one that had got started. If we build a parsonage, we expect the minister will take interest enough in it to see to these things, and not let the place run down in his hands!' Edward did n't choose to have further words before the gaping crowd; so he took his last dollar from his pocket, and bought one of the largest fir-trees. I doubt whether he did right, notwithstanding the injunction, 'If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.' It is not the dollar that I care for, — though it was the last, and though it was to have bought me another half-dozen of porter (I am getting strength, and shall do quite well without it, only father must

not know it), — but it was the exacting spirit. The inhumanity of the thing makes my heart ache. My spirit rises up against such grinding oppression; it makes me ashamed of human nature. Ah, me! this will never do; — these are scalding tears, not refreshing. I fear there is resentment underneath. O, for grace to be ashamed of *myself*, that I can bear no more patiently the infirmities of others! I am reminded of a shrewd, good-humored old lady in Salem, who had such an arch way of saying, 'Well, it takes all sorts o' people to make a world, and *I'm glad I a'n't one of 'em.*'"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"There 's not a flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There 's not a household, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair."

It is March again. The pastor's half-year's salary has been mostly received in family necessaries, at exorbitant prices. What remains he must again wait upon them for, till times are easier. The pecuniary pressure is at its height; the paper-mill is closed; the woollen and cotton factories are doing little business; the heavy strokes of the foundery, alone, boom on as steadily as ever. Still, the panic does not invade the domestic comfort of the Millville manufacturers. They eat, and drink, and dress as usual. Not so with their minister. He is one of the *operatives*. His table misses some of its wonted fare; his wardrobe tells the tale of retrenchment; his brow bears the marks of corroding care. His wife, too, is plainly and scantily attired. True, she looks well, but it is not by any adventitious aid. Mrs. Selden is vexed that the minister's wife can appear so genteelly in such mean attire without velvets, or cashmeres or furs.

With returning health, Mary redoubles her efforts for her husband, but with less success than formerly. He writes a sermon not much oftener than once a month. What he does write, is done well. Many unfinished "outlines" lie on and underneath his study-table. He makes frequent exchanges with his brethren; he repeats his former discourses, which have the misfortune to be, most of them, too striking and original to escape remembrance. He is harrowed ever by the echo of an inward whisper, "Who would have thought it would come to this?"

Yet, he is far from being entirely wretched. God has not wholly withdrawn the light of his countenance. There are times when he casts his burden on the Lord, and is sustained. Ever and anon, he dismisses all embittered feeling, humbles himself under his Father's hand, and is 'holpen with a little help.' He can sometimes say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." The Saviour's presence occasionally enlightens *all* his darkness; he feeds on heavenly manna, and feels, like Elijah, that he can go in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, though, alas! it seldom carries him many paces beyond the juniper-tree. In his straits, moreover, he has had many providential interpositions to acknowledge, — a better commentary on the promises than any his library could boast. There, too, is the unequalled joy of being a son of consolation to many a poor and way-worn pilgrim, who, in a chamber of suffering, or on a dying-bed, blesses God for his words of comfort and salvation.

Many happy hours have also been granted in the bosom of his family. What a companion to be thankful for! — what loving babes to beguile him of his heavy thoughts! He cannot reflect, without perceiving that he has had many comforts, — far more than he has deserved at the hand of his God. Neither can he review the past, without the conviction that he has, in a sense been "weighed in the balance and found want-

ing He has endured well a *few* things; but the injunction is to endure *all things*, — to *overcome*, — to hold fast, and be patient *unto the end.*

And how has it been with the gentle, brave, devoted wife? Has *she* possessed her soul in patience, with the unruffled meekness, the unmixed charity, the unrecriminating forgiveness and cheerful submission of an angel? O, no! — angels are rare on earth, even in the form of the best of womankind. Ask Mary's nearest friends, and they will tell you she has been most exemplary in the trying circumstances allotted her. Her husband will bear witness to her patience, her fortitude, her denial of self, her heroic endurance, her repaying of evil with good, her smiles amid tears, her hope against hope, her cheerful trust in God, her childlike acquiescence in his blessed will. He will tell you, in short, that she is a model of a Christian woman, and that he does not deserve so good a wife.

But, ask Mary herself, or let her ask her own heart, and its honest answer will be laden with many a penitent confession. She has been frail and erring. Her estimate of the faults of the people has not, with all her allowances, been the fruit of a calm judgment. The heart has been too much in it, tinctured with a bitterness that has often interfered with her own peace. She has been at times restive under the rod, failing to look beyond second causes to Him who appointed it. She has been wounded at a vulnerable point, in the pride of a devoted wife for a noble and gifted husband. Sensitive to his declining fame, she has found it difficult to look charitably on a people through whose means a blight has come over so much promise. Her harsh censures of others, when she might have tranquillized his spirit by soothing words, she now laments, as added fuel to the fire that was consuming his peace. In after years, she will look back to these days of trial with deep humility, and with a new appreciation of God's design in so mysterious a dispensation.

And now, their heavenly Father sees that a new stroke is

needed; and. though his heart of infinite compassion yearn over his suffering children, he will not, falsely indulgent, spare the utmost virtue of the rod.

One bleak, raw day, in this fatal month of March, their eldest darling comes from the heated school-room, and walks slowly home, looking often round, and waiting for Eddie, who has run back, at her earnest entreaty, to help a little urchin that has lost his shoe in the mud and snow. Before morning, the parents are alarmed by a hard breathing from the trundle bed, and their fears are justly excited by the presence of that destroyer of a multitude of parental hopes — the croup.

The doctor was hastily summoned, and his skill sedulously exerted; but all medical treatment was vain. Dear little Abby! From the first, she thought of death, drawing her mother down to whisper in her ear, "If I *should* die, mama, you know I am not afraid." No fond parent, who has lost a child, need be told how at first these hearts shrunk from the prospect, and the will, in imperative outcry, said, "It cannot be! It must not be! *O! it will not be.*" None but a parent can know the agony of seeing a child suffer for breath, without the power to afford the slightest alleviation, till death even is hailed as a relief.

Little Abby bore her suffering bravely, speaking such words of courage, and affection, and Christian trust, as amazed those who knew not the sweet, holy power of faith and love in the heart of a child. Truly, of such are the kingdom of heaven. At one time she said, "Mama, if Jesus wants me there, ought you not to be willing?" and she would not rest, till her mother could assure her, through blinding tears, that she hoped she was willing. "O!" said the dear child, "I wish you could *smile*, and say it." Again, seeing her father look at her with regretful tenderness, she interpreted his thought, and said, "You will have Nellie."

She had a word for all. To her cousin, she spoke of Jesus, and heaven, and his own soul, and asked him, "If he would

please, sometimes, rock the baby, as she did, and let mama go up to the study to comfort papa."

As the disease progressed, speech was more and more difficult, yet her eye was eloquent with love and hope.

Toward the last, Mr. Vernon's fortitude forsook him. He could not witness the distress of the child. But, mother-like, Mary hushed the great agony of her heart, that she might not lose a word or look, or pressure of the hand, while life remained.

The second day, at the going down of the sun, it was evident that the little sufferer could not much longer endure. The last words of the dying child were characteristic of her, — true to the impulses caught from the mother's daily example. In a short interval of less suffering, her father came in and kissed her cold lips with something like composure, and told her she had almost reached her heavenly home. She bent on him those deep, spiritual eyes, where the soul seemed to reside, rather than look through, and said, affectionately, "By-and-by, papa will come; and mama, and Allie, and all, — all come home." With that word, commenced another distressing paroxysm. Her father again retreated. Mr. Clifton took her in his arms, and, during the dreadful struggle, the dear child, it seemed, heard her father pacing up and down the adjoining room. Making an effort to speak once more, she said, "Dear — Saviour, — *comfort papa*," — threw her arms round her mother's neck, and soon expired.

Now was Mary's turn to bow her head like a bulrush. The strong tide of feeling, rolled back, lest it should distress the child, or unfit her for its care, returned with resistless force, all the stronger for long constraint. The husband, now that the fatal issue was past, — now that there was no more sight of suffering to unnerve him, — stood by her side in manly composure; a prop on which to lean, a tender counsellor, an able comforter, next to her God, a strong support. He knew the art which too few understand, — the art of effective sympathy

and consolation. It was not long ere they could both look up and thank God that their little one had gone to dwell with the angels, before his face.

With a calm submission and holy trust, they laid the beautiful form in the village grave-yard, among strangers to her kin; while, on the burial scene, looked many tearful eyes, the March winds wailing no gentle requiem. Among the few who followed them to their bereaved home was their old Scotch friend, who took them by the hand, and said, "Aweel, ye canna greet sa very sair. She was mair like heaven than earth. Mony a time I watched her in the kirk, and kend she wad be sent for. Of sic' is the kingdom."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Joy hath its ministries, but *griefs* are fraught
With gentler blessings."

One week after little Abby's burial there was another death, which left Mabel Ellis motherless. Faithful to her promise, Mrs. Vernon took her home. Mabel was a stout girl, with square face, and broad shoulders, and gray eyes; with strong common sense, a quick appreciation of kindness, and a warm, affectionate heart.

And now a new stream of gossip is set in motion, augmenting as it flows. *Two* hired girls at the parsonage! Who could expect to live, with such extravagance? Miss Polly, at first, rebelled, and declared she would leave if that girl came, but, upon second thoughts, she resolved to stay, and make use of the new comer to lighten her own tasks.

Soft and odorous as the perfume of crushed flowers is the atmosphere at the parsonage, where the angel of death has left two smitten hearts. These chastened ones are walking softly before their God. Tears for the dead, welling up from the

deep places of the heart, have softened and purified in their flow How blessed is the grief that sinks its shaft so low, — that drives the ploughshare beneath every root of bitterness and repining, making the soil mellow and fruitful!

Nor was *comfort* wanting in that house of mourning. To the eye of faith, One walked there whose form was like unto that of the Son of God. "Fear not; I am with thee." There was a holy hush on those bowed spirits. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

They sought not consolation at Lethe's cup, as did a young, pleasure-loving mother, who, reminded of the darling she had buried a twelve-month previous, said, "I don't wish to speak of him, — it makes me very unhappy." These Christian parents did not purchase peace, by forgetfulness. The child was not *dead* to *them*, — only removed beyond their sight. Her angel-presence was with them oft, — in the stilly night, — at the day dawn, — at the hour of prayer, — in the song of praise. There is a new tie between their hearts and heaven. They have a *human* treasure there. The home of glory is nearer, — it is more real. From their darkened dwelling they catch new beams of the celestial light. Their eyes, now often upturned, see new revealings of the God of love. Their human sympathies become a sanctified medium of spiritual blessings.

"Let us honor God," said Edward, "by our *cheerful* spirit under his correction. Let not a sad, desponding countenance belie our words of submission, and show that we valued the gift, however precious, above the Giver."

What more touching and more honorable to divine grace, than the sight of a bereaved household with the tenderest sensibilities, bowing meekly under the rod, smiling through their tears, able to say, "Whom have we in heaven but *Thee*, and there is none upon earth that we desire besides thee," — rejoicing in God through the longest, darkest night of sorrow, with a song in the heart, even when the utterance is choked by grief?

And did not this new affliction at the parsonage rally the flock around the stricken pastor? In not a few hearts there was, indeed, a livelier sympathy. But such things have less influence in softening antipathies than a superficial observer would suppose Mr. Vernon's opposers interpreted it as the judgment of a frowning Providence.

While the bereavement was still fresh, Mary stood by the dying bed of Mrs. Mills, Deacon Slocum's sister-in-law She met with a cool reception from all except the dying woman, who pressed her hand affectionately, and whispered, "My girls, — do care for them when I am gone." The doctor thought she might last through the day, and Mrs. Vernon offered to lay off her bonnet and remain a few hours. Old Mrs. Slocum seemed much excited by the offer, and replied, "Oh, no! — you had better not stay. Your health is so poor, you could n't do much."

Mary answered, meekly, "It would be a privilege to sit by her; I might fan her, and moisten her lips." The old lady interrupted her with the sharp remark, "I guess we shan't neglect her." Mary hastily bade the last adieu, the eyes of her dying friend following her with remorseful tenderness as she left the room in tears. She went home with a wounded spirit; and, when the bell tolled at the going down of the sun, said to Edward, "The last tie that bound us to that house is broken."

The spring had gone, and, with the opening summer, the times were easier, and business men began to breathe more freely. Yet, to the poor pastor there came no relief. His flour was gone, and there was none to be had, except for cash. Of this he had not a penny.

The case became more urgent, and he bethought himself of a curious gold coin in his secretary, the gift of his beloved sister, in his boyhood. He had seen one or two extremities before, when he thought of this resort. He had taken the piece in his hand, but his heart rose to his throat, and it seemed a sac

rilege to expend it. Hitherto, Providence had obviated the necessity. Now, however, there was no alternative. His wife and children must have bread. So his dead sister's treasured keepsake was appropriated beyond recall.

Mr. Vernon had no design of remaining in Millville beyond the present year; yet his departure was precipitated by other agencies than his own.

The reigning influences in the society were betrayed by Aunt Hannah, as, in one of her visiting rounds, she brought up at the parsonage. The kind creature, wishing to make herself useful, generally volunteered her aid at clear-starching and crimping, at which she was an adept. With her bowl of starch on the kitchen table, and her irons in the cook-stove, and the doors open to the back parlor, she promenaded the intervening space, clapping the muslins and retailing the gossip.

"I do say, Mrs. Vernon, it 's a wonder your husband has any patience with such a people. I wish he knew what Moulton is up to now. I wish he 'd get the start of 'em."

Mary sat revolving this, while Aunt Hannah went back for another collar.

"Mrs. Elton, too. I should n't have thought it,—they were both so anxious to have him stay, when he tried so hard to go. Now, to put their heads together in this way. She wants *him* to give the hint, and he thinks *Elton* might do it; and deacon says, unless they stir about it, he 'll bring it up in open meeting, and see what can be done."

It had always seemed to Mary, that her husband's talents were too confessedly superior, not to procure for him tolerance in the failures arising from the pressure of such peculiar trials as he had met in Millville. The drift of Aunt Hannah's remarks awoke her to a new view of the subject. She wisely forbore comment, and her visitor went into a collateral matter.

"I called at Mrs. Nobles' a minute. I don't know what 's got into this people. She said I 'd better come up here; she should think you might want a little more help. She wondered

what you should want of two girls; — said you 'd better send one of 'em to poor Mrs. Hine, who was sick and could n't get anybody."

Mary sighed, gently, and replied, "Can they not appreciate my motives in taking that child? I thought every one knew the circumstances. Mrs. Nobles must see her go to school every day."

"None so blind as those that will not see!" replied Aunt Hannah. "I tell 'em, if they could be here awhile, and know how much poor health you have, and how many cares, — with that fat baby, too, to nurse and lug about, — they never would say, again, what an easy life our minister's wife leads! I tell 'em, if they want to fault Mr. Vernon, they need n't be putting it off on you."

"O, yes!" said Mary, laughingly; "I can endure it better than he."

"You don't look like enduring much," said Aunt Hannah; "but Dr. Gale says, they may say what they like about the parson's wife, she 's more courage and fortitude than half a dozen of 'em."

Mary's eyes ached, and her cheek burned, and her heart was heavy. She was glad when Aunt Hannah had crimped the last ruffle, drank her third cup of tea, and said her last good-night.

That evening there was a long conference in the nursery. Low, troubled voices mingled with the soft breathings of the children; and the voice of prayer arose there, long after the village was wrapt in slumber.

Mr. Vernon soon held an interview with Moulton, that confirmed his suspicions, and, without further delay, he renewed his request for a dismission. It was received, by the majority of the people, with profound regret; by the conservatives, with poorly feigned reluctance; by his active opposers, with open triumph.

The council heard the story, and gave their consent. As

Mr. Vernon told them of his straits, he alluded to the incident of the flour and precious relic. Mr. Lampson said, "You should never let your purse get so low. *I* always consider myself out of money when I have but five dollars left."

Father Elliott looked over his glasses, and asked Mr. Vernon how long he had been in the ministry.

"About six years," was the reply. "And," said the facetious minister, "you have kept a pocket-piece so long! You may consider yourself, sir, more fortunate than most of your brethren. It 's time you lost it, or you might doubt your call!"

When people from abroad asked the reason of Mr. Vernon's dismission, Mrs. Elton's ready answer was, "He was very talented, but unequal and moody. He did n't grow (!) as we expected. He had to wait upon his wife so much, it took up his time, and he became disheartened. She was quite intellectual, and had a good spirit; but sick most of the time, and nervous. He is very sensitive, and it 's no wonder it broke him down. We have been very unfortunate in our ministers' wives!"

Good Mrs. Wells said she could n't be reconciled to parting with the minister's folks. When Mr. Smith left, she declared she never would love another minister; "but," said she, "I could n't help it, Mr. Vernon was so pleasing in his ways; then, there 's something about him I never saw in any one else; sometimes he was just like a grieved child. His wife, too, a perfect lady, put up with our plain ways; and they took such an interest, — coming in and sitting right down in our kitchen, as if they were to home, — and now they must go. It a' most breaks my heart;" and she wiped her eyes on the corner of her checked apron. "I wish I was back to the old church on the hill."

In settling his pecuniary affairs at Millville, the poverty-stricken pastor found himself "minus" in a larger sum than he had anticipated. To liquidate all his obligations from the

first, required the amount of four hundred dollars. The people did not see how it came to pass, especially, considering the splendid donation party. Where should he turn for this sum? A part of the claims were urgent. There was Miss Polly's bill for a year and a half. Susan Beach he could not leave unpaid. He made a hasty journey to Salem, and tried to dispose of his place; but wrote back that he could not do it without a great sacrifice.

While he was gone, Mr. Moulton came in to look at the piano. Jennie was taking lessons, and he was about to purchase. He knew this to be a fine-toned instrument, and called to ask where it was purchased, and the cost. After he left, an idea entered Mary's mind, which she revolved long and with much emotion. She rose, at length, with a decided air, and stepped across the street to Mr. Moulton's, with a proposal that was accepted. It was no less than this; that her piano be removed to Mrs. Moulton's parlor, for Jennie's use, in return for which, the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars (half the original cost) be loaned without interest. In short, Mary proposed to pawn the piano for its lowest value as a second-hand instrument, with the understanding that she might redeem it whenever she chose. This, she confidently expected, would be soon, — whenever they should sell the place in Salem. To do this, cost her a struggle; but hers was a heroic spirit. When Edward returned, and his consent was asked, he suffered a still harder conflict, but yielded at length to her entreaty, and ratified the contract.

Then followed the packing up and storage of household goods and chattels; then the leave-taking. The locality had few charms for Mary; still, it was leaving a place that had borne the sacred name of home. There were a few friends, too, whom she dearly loved. One spot alone chained her heart, and was as consecrated ground, — her darling's grave. Long did she lean over that little marble pillar, in the summer moon-

light, and wish — while she repelled the weakness — that she could carry with her the precious dust.

Here was a tie that linked this removal with their last; and her thoughts went back to that autumn evening, when the moonbeams fell across Carrie's grave, in the old Salem churchyard. Again the electric chain was struck, and another link was revealed; her mother's tomb, in the gray twilight of a winter's morning, to which she bade adieu from the chamber of her girlhood's home.

We next find the minister's family quite at home in the old mansion at Mayfield. Master Eddie is the doctor's pupil in Latin; in other branches, "Aunt Mary" hears his recitations. Mabel Ellis is busy as a bee wherever she is wanted, — in nursery or kitchen, — all the while receiving that careful nurture which consists of daily instruction, correction, and example.

Mr. Vernon is not the man to throw himself and family, without a struggle, on the hospitality of a father-in-law, whose utmost efforts but just keep his estate out of the hands of creditors. But what can he do? He is in a condition worse, if possible, than when making desperate exertions to sustain himself in Millville pulpit. True, there burns in his soul no resentment; the fires of disappointed ambition, too, have gone out, — quenched in tears of penitence. He is humble and subdued; has ceased to war with his allotment; but the spring of his mental activities, whose elasticity was so long tried by heavy pressure, has snapped asunder, and left him prostrate. He is dispirited, and incapable of effort; doubts whether the Lord will give him any more to do in his vineyard; doubts his ability to do; distrusts his motives; is willing to take a very low place, and bid farewell forever to the world's applause, and his old dreams of greatness. Withal, bodily indisposition is too apparent and serious not to awaken the anxious fears of his friends. Dr. Allison recommends a journey, and he resolves to

follow the prescription; yet this is one of the "all things" which "money" alone "answereth."

"O!" sighed he, "how could I be so foolish as to buy a house? If the money had been put into the savings bank, instead" —

"We should have spent it long ago, in our straits," interrupted Mary, playfully.

"What do you think," said he, "of selling Pompey?"

"Why," said Mary, "he *is* decidedly too intelligent for a *minister's* horse. He knows the difference between swamp-hay and upland, and shakes his head too sagely over musty provender. But I would not sell him *now*."

Something, however, must be done. He makes another trip to Salem. (Tears start, unbidden, at sight of the dear, quiet old town.) He takes advice of Mr. Cook, and resolves to sell his house at public auction. He values it at fifteen hundred dollars; — it is knocked down at nine hundred; four of which he receives in ready money, and the rest in promissory notes, a hundred annually, till the whole is paid.

Though pained at the sacrifice, still the minister and his wife are thankful for ability to conform to the letter of the inspired precept, "Owe no man anything.' There is barely enough left to redeem the piano. Shall it be thus appropriated? Edward urges the affirmative. Mary's judgment has too long controlled her feelings to be overcome here. The money is retained for current expenses.

It is a sultry morning in August, when our invalid minister starts on a distant journey, in pursuit of health. "The angel of the covenant go with him, with healing for the spirit," was Mary's benediction, as she stood under the drooping elm, and watched him out of sight.

CHAPTER XXX.

"We have sifted your objections."

We are strongly tempted, here, to break the thread of our story, and have a chat with our auditors. We seem to hear an impatient movement among those who have listened quietly thus far, to our plain, unvarnished tale. Voices are becoming audible, on either side, whose murmur portends some decided expression of individual opinion, — not without some dissonance, — in reference to our friend, Mr. Vernon. Hear, hear! What says the gentleman on our right?

"I think your minister an unaccountably foolish fellow; — when he had a good profession, — a noble profession, to which he was, every way, adapted; in which he might, by this time, have grown rich and famous, — to abandon it for such a thankless, impoverishing business as preaching. He sees the end of it now, and may blame himself. I know they want *good* men in the pulpit; but Vernon is too capital a fellow to be sacrificed there."

Honorable sir, allow us to say, that you seem somewhat contracted in your views of things. Did you ever hear of such a thing as *conscience*, in the choice of a profession? Did you ever read the history of one Paul, a man of splendid talents, who abandoned the bar for the pulpit? Will you examine the matter a little closer, and tell us why the pulpit should not command men capable of the clearest argument, the closest logic, the most impassioned appeal? If we need eloquent men to defend our worldly rights, and our mortal lives, whom do we need to plead our immortal interests, where the stake is worth as much as heaven and the undying soul? As to the "end," dear sir, the end is not yet. What though the profession

involve the loss of all things? It is only a temporary loss. When the judgment is rendered, the advocates will be rewarded with a large draft on an unfailing treasury, — an end which some people are too near-sighted to discover, but which, after all, is not very distant.

We will now hear the gentleman on our left.

"I wished to ask the historian, what means this frowning Providence, if the man has not, after all, mistaken his calling? Ought not so many trials to confirm his old scruples, and justify the conclusion that he is out of his sphere?"

A very lawful question, Mr. Foggyman, and one we will be happy to clear up for you. When was ever the path of duty a smooth, even course? God chastens in *love* oftener than in wrath. With his ministering servants he has a double end to secure by his providential treatment, — the nurture of their own souls, their personal salvation, and the qualifying of them for their official work, so as best to subserve the spiritual nurture of the flock committed to them. This double end often demands a peculiar and more varied use of affliction than falls to the lot of other men. If Mr. Vernon's trials bear at all on your question, Mr. Foggyman, they would seem to indicate that he was *not* mistaken in his calling; but was rapidly undergoing a salutary discipline, fitted to the nicer uses of the great Master-workman, and to his own more abundant entrance into rest.

We hear other voices, less dispassionate, — two or three in a breath. What is *your* trouble, friends?

"We are out of patience with your minister. He is weak, — chicken-hearted; worse than this, he is wicked. What! a minister of Christ indulge impatience and bitterness, flounce under opposition, and finally lie down in the harness! He is not fit to be an ambassador of Christ. He ought to be ashamed of his want of endurance. He is a very imperfect man. Many a private Christian has borne, and not fainted, in worse trials than his. After all, what has he suffered, to make such an ado about? It seems to us he has not sufficient courage as

a man of grace as a Christian, for so holy a work as the preaching of the Gospel."

You are rather severe, good friends; yet Mr. Vernon doubtless agrees with you. He is very low, just now, in his own estimation, as well as in yours. But your views do not quite accord with ours. Perhaps we see things from different standpoints. Must God's ambassadors be perfect? Then why not commit the Gospel to angels? If *He* choose to commit the treasure to earthen vessels, — mind, not *gold* or *silver*, but earthen, — what marvel that they crack over the furnace? Are they, therefore, to be despised and discarded? After all, in whose hands will the Gospel do sinning men the most good, and be best exemplified, — in a holy angel's, or a fellow-sinner's? Moreover, you make too light of our minister's trials. Perhaps, not being in your line, they are such as you cannot readily appreciate. You do not see them from his point of vision, and you do not feel them — at all.

You intimate, also, that he has not improved his afflictions aright, — not ripened under them in Christian goodness, as might have been expected. Wait a little longer for the result. The choicest fruit of the earth does not mellow at once under a fierce July sun. There must be time for every valuable process of growth and culture. Jonah's gourd, indeed, sprung up in a night; but it lasted not well. Wait awhile, sirs, and you may have occasion to look back, and acknowledge that the grace of God is best magnified in just such messengers as he chooses, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. The excellency of the power is thus seen to be of God. Understand us not to excuse any man's sin. To every one that serves in word and doctrine we would say, "See that ye be blameless and harmless, — the sons of God, without rebuke; giving no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." But to you we say, "A minister is but a man. See that ye bear with his infirmities."

Another hearer is anxious to speak. What wouldst thou, man?

"I only wish to say that it appears to me there is a plain way of relief for your minister, and for all others who meet with like trials. Let them abandon the work, and go about something else. I do not believe God requires men to *starve* in the ministry, in these days. If I were in Mr. Vernon's place, I would seek some employment that would yield a fair remuneration. I would go into the field, or the shop, and work where my services would be requited."

Ah, friend! you touch a delicate point. The adversary sometimes tempts the Lord's servants in this way, when they are at their wit's end, and the iron enters into their soul. As Mr. Vernon once said, "I work as hard as Moulton or Walter. I had as much capital to begin with as they. I could have made money as well. Now that I have relinquished such prospects, and spent ten of my best years to qualify me for preaching, why should they dole out to me of their abundance a mere pittance, and call it *charity*, and consider me as a pensioner upon their bounty?" and his lip curled, and Satan whispered, "You are young enough yet to redeem what is lost, and enter the lists with the strongest in the race for riches and honor." Alas, poor heart! it must break for this, and lie in sackcloth at the Saviour's feet.

Let us tell you, well-meaning adviser, you know not of what you speak, when you coolly say, "If a man is ill-used in the ministry, let him seek another occupation." If he was called of God to this work, — if his whole heart be in it, — he will pursue it while ability lasts, though he fall a martyr to his constancy. In all his straits, there lies at the bottom of his heart a sentiment as old as the ministry itself. "Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the Gospel; for the love of Christ constraineth me; yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

One more voice asks to be heard.

"I would not advise a minister to give up his profession; but I do say that *churches* who abuse a pastor as Millville church did, ought to smart for it. The ministers should form a combination, and refuse to labor for such a people, till they learn better views and better manners. I would like to see it tried."

And what, in the mean time, would become of the cause of Christ? No, inconsiderate friend; the worse the community, the more urgent the need of the leaven of the Gospel; the more worldly and self-serving the church, the greater the importance of a faithful, unselfish ministry over it. It is a hard rock to hammer upon, and it breaks many an implement; but it will come gradually into shape, here a little and there a little. Your advice is contrary to the genius of our religion. A ministerial "strike" has been recommended, we are aware, by wiser heads than yours; but the Lord's work must not be deserted because his stewards defraud the laborers. "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

And now, dear hearers, one and all, will you hold your prejudices in abeyance, take in good part our setting aside of your opinions, and allow us to resume our narrative?

CHAPTER XXXI.

"O! sparkling clear thy waters glow,
And murmur as they glide
To the fair trees that bend below
To kiss the loving tide;
And far above thy mountains stand,
Like watch-towers placed to guard a land,
Where all conspires to yield delight,
Where pleasure reigns by day and night."

As the lover of inland scenery travels from west to east, through one of our fair New England commonwealths, let him pause upon the height of a mountain-range that guards the valley-town of Olney. The ascent has been long and winding; but, coming by a sudden turn to the well-defined summit, the sense of vision absorbs all others, and, if you are a lover of nature, you forget at once the weary road behind, in the beautiful panorama spread before you.

Beneath, at an almost perpendicular depth, you trace the quiet river, whose liquid name, on Indian lips, glided as smoothly as its waters flow, — placid waters, of which you catch many a glimpse between the marginal willows, here and there, like so many little lakes reposing in the valley. Beyond its further bank clusters the white village; and, far up and down the long sweep of low-land, isolated farm-houses lie in the arms of the rich meadows. The rich purple of the upturned soil, and the green of grassy fields, make a mosaic ground-work for the landscape, while, away to the northward and the eastward, hills piled on hills, in spiritual blue, frame it in.

Descending through overhanging woods, — grand old forest trees, — you pace slowly up the wide-curved street of our little town, resting in its redundant maple-shade. The church looks out upon you, fair and grave, through its veil of leaves. Be-

hind it is the burial-ground, — omnipresent witness to man's mortality, — whose marbles, here as elsewhere, in summer and in winter, by sunlight and by starlight, ever tell their story of the grave; whose flowers blossom in their well-remembered time, even as our tears spring anew on that returning day which first opened the fountain of grief in our hearts. But the traveller lingers not here. On either side the broad thoroughfare stand the abodes of thrift and comfort. A little further on, in a recess, back from the dust of the highway, rises the modest parsonage, — an ordinary building, in itself devoid of ornament. Yet, somehow, the passer-by turns to give it a second glance, — to notice how abundantly the twining vines cover its trellised entrances, — what wealth of roses cluster beneath its windows, — what nice commingling of fruit, and flower, and shade, adorns the spot. A stranger cannot but think that it is the home of taste and domestic peace

At the rear of the house a silver streamlet dashes by on its sparkling run toward the waiting river, hasting to lose itself in the calm, strong flow of the larger current; even as the changing fancies and restless activities of youth are absorbed in the fuller thought, the intenser purpose, the collected enthusiasm, of a mature soul-life. Beyond the gay brook is a little knoll, bearing a thick growth of the conical pine, — that tree which speaks to the wind in a strangely human voice, full of companionship to the understanding ear.

O! it is *always beautiful*, this pleasant retreat from the crowded world, — this shaded village-home, — Nature's favorite, nested beneath the sentinelship of one of her grand old mountains. That mountain is the crowning charm of the spot. Whether its forest-side is dressed in the light verdure of the budding year, or draped in the thick green of the ripe summer, — glorious in the many hues of the gorgeous autumn, or silvered with the frozen rain of winter in dazzling brilliancy, — the soul of beauty is in it still.

How inexpressibly dear does it become to the heart of him

who, in his joy and sadness, has often turned to its silent sympathy, as, in the clearness of the early light, and the glory of the sun-setting, in the soft fervor and flitting shadows of mid day, in the leaden cloud hanging upon its cliffs, and the fantastic mist wreathing its sides, in the bow which beameth upon the shower, far below its summit, he feels its spirit answering back in every shade unto his own!

Such is Olney now; such was it ten years ago, with a single exception, — the parsonage was not then built.

When the invalid returned to Mayfield, after a six weeks' absence in pursuit of health, he found an invitation awaiting him to preach in the vacant parish of Olney. Julia Rogers, his Salem protégé, had an uncle there, and so the invitation came about. Mr. Rogers had written his brother on the subject; and the reply was, "Mr. Vernon is head and shoulders above your place, but there is no foretelling what he may do. He is rather eccentric, and just now disgusted with life in a manufacturing village. He is out of health, too, and low-spirited. Perhaps he may come and preach a few Sabbaths in a quiet place like Olney."

As Edward Vernon paused on the mountain eminence, and, laying the rein on Pompey's neck, gazed off into that goodly amphitheatre, its beauty and quiet came like balm to his soul, breathing of "home" and "rest." When he passed the neat embowered church, and saw the last rays of sunlight resting on the grave-yard, he felt that he could die, and be buried there. He was charmed even with the solitude that attended him in his boarding-place, and felt not the lack of attentions as a stranger among strange people. Attentions! he had a surfeit of them at his entrance to Millville.

There could not well be a more striking contrast than was here presented to his late parish, both in the rural beauty of its natural scenery, and the plain, simple manners of its agricultural population.

So he preached, and ere long the people sounded him on the

subject of "settlement." To their surprise, he made no objections, and no inquiries after terms. A formal call was soon extended, and, after a single exchange of letters with Mayfield, *accepted*. The minister seemed to act mechanically, or, rather, to resign himself passively to the current of circumstances. His "hundred and one" friends were greatly amazed; yet, after all, it was not so very inexplicable.

The times were unsettled, and ministers held their places by a precarious tenure. There were many "isms" abroad. Society was rife with party tests and watchwords. The ministry, too, had its "shibboleths," and it was no easy thing for an *independent* man to find a congenial niche. As one not "ower" refined D. D. remarked, "Many pastors were holding on, with slippery fingers, to the tail end of their pulpit."

"Anything but this," thought Mr. Vernon, "to hold a place by sufferance." He was faint under the noise, and strife, and heat, of the times. He wished to hide, for a little season, till the indignation be overpast. He was small in his own eyes, not seeking for himself great things. It seemed a wonder of condescension that God should employ him anywhere in his vineyard. Moreover, he felt inadequate to any great effort. The feeling that much was expected of him, would alone be sufficient to crush him. He was worn in body, mind, and spirit. Anything for *rest*, — a sheltered spot, where he might,

> "See the stir
> Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd."

When he read the terms of settlement, he did indeed say to the Olney committee that he had never tried living on so small a sum as five hundred dollars, — that he did not think it would enable him to bring the year round. But they replied, it was all they could afford to give. He believed their word, and consented to the proposals, feeling that he had something to fall back upon, if his expenditures should exceed his salary. The

expenses of living, he thought, must be low in such a community.

One thing, however, he did insist upon, — the building of a parsonage. His predecessor, Mr. Rice, had moved three times during a ministry of five years, and finally left for want of a suitable dwelling-house.

The people scowled somewhat at his request, and hoped he would bring his family, and commence house-keeping in a corner of the capacious building, known formerly as the brick hotel, but latterly called "the old castle." This he positively declined; and, as there was no other alternative, measures were taken to build a house, and the installation postponed. The business was committed to three trustees, who hired a carpenter to do it by the job. These men had their own private interests to look after, and could give only a general supervision to the undertaking. The pastor elect kept his eye upon it, and secured attention to many little things that would have been otherwise neglected. Yet, his interference was considered rather troublesome, and any great improvement in plan or execution he was not able to effect.

To those familiar with the prevalent mode of parish building for the minister, description here is not needed. When the frame was up, it looked too slender to stand against a "reg'lar nor'easter." The clapboards were added without lining; and when Mr. Vernon remonstrated with one of the trustees, the truth-telling farmer replied, "I s'pose, if one of us were building it for ourselves, we should have it lined; but it 's a *parsonage*, you know, and we must get it up at the least expense."

"There is a fine place for a basement-kitchen," said Mr. Vernon to another trustee.

"Yes," replied Mr. Tuthill; "if it were for myself I would have one by all means."

Ah! it is only a *parsonage;* and what does a minister's family want of a room in the basement? The kitchen is nine feet by twelve, with a small fire-place, and a narrow oven, and

a little pantry. It 's only a *parsonage!* Half the timber is ill-seasoned, — the fixtures are of the cheapest kind, — the second coat of paint laid on before the first is dry, — the plaster coarse and incohesive, — the floors constructed as if for ventilation, and of planks differing in thickness, presenting a varied surface of hill and dale, — the windows without blinds, loose and shaking in every breeze, as if with the ague. It was only a *parsonage!* Then, the exterior was finished without ornament of pillar, cornice, or moulding, — much more discarding such luxurious appendages as a corridor, veranda, or portico. They would add to the expense, and might foment pride within the parsonage, and jealousies without.

"Do tell us," says some fair reader, "what kind of people these were in Olney."

"O!" says another, "excuse us from any more familiar introductions to the 'all sorts of people' that a minister must be acquainted with. Our memory is burdened already." Well, you shall be spared the infliction. Human nature, we allow, is the same the world over; yet, there are some phases of it in Olney which, methinks, we have not met elsewhere since we 'gan travel together. However, you shall not be bored with any more full-length portraits, framed and labelled. You may have the materials, and draw them for yourself. To avoid confusion, we may give a *name* here and there, as it *is* rather more convenient, than to say, "Mr. So-and-So," or "a certain woman."

To return from this awkward episode to the question of our fair reader. We intend you shall learn what kinds of character make up the parish of Olney, as their minister did, from the intercourse of years, when the history of that intercourse shall be laid before you. As a clue to correct results, we will give you some hints that may be of service.

The parish consisted of a hundred families, among whom there was no such thing as caste, although there was some diversity of intellectual and social culture. They were a sens-

ible, thrifty, frugal people, — accumulating property by small gains, of which they were very tenacious. They were under the shadow of a large town a few miles southward, which opened a market for their produce. The habit of running thither, with a brace of fowls, or a dozen eggs, or a bushel of early apples and potatoes, made them unconsciously parsimonious and contracted respecting many things in which the farmers of the larger inland towns are free as the milch kine of their meadows. There was, moreover, in this little community, an intense individualism. With few exceptions, everybody lived for himself, and took care of number one.

Again; there was no person, of superior wisdom and reputation, looked up to as guide and leader. Deacon Hyde was a man who thought and read more than many of the people; but he held his opinions rigidly, and was not generally popular, — besides seeking his own interest too exclusively for a public servant. Deacon White was a well-meaning, self-complacent man, who carried his sentiments, like his money, in a deep, out-of-the-way place, so that it took an age to fish either of them up. Esquire Eaton, the richest church member, took some lead in political matters; but, in the department of religion and morals, he was careful not to step out of the line, unless in the rear. Captain Brown, whose heart was always in the right place, was too little cultivated, and too easy, to take the helm; while, of a *minister's* leadership, there was, throughout the parish, a pervading jealousy.

In regard to *preaching*, they were not a very discriminating people. If a man was sound in doctrine, fluent in speech, pleasant in address, he was, in their estimation, "a smart preacher." Their estimate of Mr. Vernon's talents was derived more from his reputation abroad, than from their own judgment of his performances. Hence, though many said, at first, "We cannot hope to settle a man of such gifts;" yet, from the moment he *consented to stay*, he depreciated in their eyes. "He cannot, after all, be anything great, or he would

not stay in Olney." Millville people magnified and exalted him because he was *their* minister. Olney, lacking in self-respect, for the same reason held him in less repute.

"Human natur *is* cur'ous."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"The parsonage
. . . . . might well be made
A comfortable mansion."

That first winter in the new parsonage, was one of many discomforts. It was a new beginning at house-keeping, — always a time of unusual cares. The girl, Mabel, was Mrs. Vernon's only help, and, though invaluable in the nursery, was yet to be trained in the kitchen. The children suffered much from frequent colds. The house was damp, and bare of such conveniences as accumulate with the occupancy of a dwelling. The builder's work, too, was left very incomplete. He found he had been screwed too close in the contract, and so revenged himself on the house. To supply the deficiency, took all Mr. Vernon's odd moments, and many a pound of nails, and more pine stuff than the refuse afforded. The fences were still unbuilt; and, when the spring opened, the garden patch was not only unenclosed, it was an unbroken turf; while, on all the place, there was, as Trinculo said of his desert island, "neither bush, nor shrub, to bear off any weather at all."

For this naked half-acre, with a house and barn, the people charged the annual rent of seventy-five dollars, nearly six per cent. on the cost. The minister did not conceal his surprise at this disproportion between the house-rent and salary but there was no appeal from the decision.

At New-Year's, the annual sale of pews occurred. Captain

Brown accosted Mr. Vernon with the air of one conferring a favor, and bade him welcome, with his family, to the "minister's pew;" adding, "I suppose, if I should come in when my own slip is crowded, Mrs. Vernon will not turn me out?" The new pastor did not understand. He turned to Deacon Hyde for explanation; and was told, with some embarrassment, that the minister here had always been in the habit of paying for his pew in church; that Captain Brown had just bid it off, for seven dollars, as a present to Mr. Vernon. Mr. Vernon's spirit rose against this exaction. He had not lost all the old fire. He told the deacon he would resign the pulpit, before he would pay a tax of this kind toward his own support. There was no Deacon Ely in the parish, to cry shame on such an illiberal policy. Indeed, the present incumbents of the deaconship had no proper conception of the nature of their office.

To attend upon the sacramental table; to keep the alms of the church; to read a sermon in the minister's absence; to examine candidates for church-membership; to pray at the stated social meeting;—this seemed the amount of their official obligations. It appeared not to enter their thoughts that the office had its origin in the commendable purpose to relieve the pastor from solicitude and labor, respecting secular and collateral objects, that he might give himself with more freedom to the ministry of the word.

To watch against annoyances in his pathway; to shield him from burdens not properly his own; to stand between him and the pecuniary requisitions which, thrown back by many a defaulter, must rest somewhere, and are so apt to fall on the minister; to make all the surroundings of his professional work as comfortable and pleasant as possible; to help him in his attendance upon the sick and suffering; to proffer aid and sympathy in peculiar and trying services;—the Olney deacons had never opened their eyes on this part of their official work; the department which, more than any other, required from the first,

"men of wisdom and good repute. For all *they* will do, the pastor may be a hewer-of-wood and drawer-of-water for the congregation, — make the fires and keep the doors of the sanctuary, — and provide, not only the beaten oil for the pulpit, but the sperm oil for the evening lamps.

Late in the spring, Mr. Vernon presented the subject of home missions, and informed the congregation that a collection would be taken up the ensuing week. After church, he conferred with the deacons about collectors. They suggested one and another, who "*ought*" to accept the service. The next day the pastor renewed the search, but in vain. After spending several hours in this way, he called upon Deacon Hyde, saying, "Unless you can go, I believe I must turn collector myself." The reply was, "I cannot see to it. I must finish my garden this week." "Mine," said Mr. Vernon, "is untouched." "It 's a busy season," said the other deacon; if any one is *at leisure*, it would n't be much to go over this district." And so they let the minister collect the charities of the church from door to door; nor was it the last time that they abandoned him, in a similar strait, to make provision for a like service. The next week Mrs. Vernon was in the garden, dropping a few flower-seeds, when Deacon Hyde leaned over the fence and asked if she had taken the garden in hand. She replied, it was time something was done; and he rejoined, with a satisfied air, "*My* garden is planted."

Mrs. Vernon found the people unaccountably shy of her All her philosophy could never explain the matter. It seemed as if it were the general impression that a minister's family was a foreign and dangerous element in the community, — an object of suspicion and watchfulness. She dispensed with etiquette, and sought acquaintance with the people at their own homes; but she felt, with pain, that they did not meet her with open confidence. Mrs. Plympton, when asked to call more frequently, said "she had little time. Ladies, who kept a hired girl, might be able to run about and make calls; but we

plain folks, that do our own work, find enough to keep us at home." Many a housewife in Olney had a grown-up daughter, or maiden sister, or widowed aunt, with whom to divide the labor of the house; but this was quite another affair from "hired help."

Mary was fond of quiet, and had too many cares, to pine over her loneliness; yet she felt, at times, the want of social intercourse. For weeks together, no female friend looked in at the parsonage. The change was striking after a residence in Millville. She would sometimes say, playfully, to Edward, "I think I could endure Aunt Hannah now, with all her clear-starching and gossip;" or, "Even a call from sister Harris, would be tolerable, though she should come with a petition for a double sermon on chastity, and five sheets of statistics in reference to a charity school in Abyssinia."

It is a busy year, both with the pastor and his wife. A wise economy is practised; yet, though the semi-annual payment of the salary is made promptly, and in cash, it requires little foresight to tell how matters will stand at the year's end. The price of living has been higher than Mr. Vernon anticipated. He must give for produce all it will bring in town. He bought one ton of hay of a man who lived on the borders of the parish, out of his society, and gave eleven dollars. Esquire Eaton asked him why he did not purchase of his own people. *He* had hay (not quite as good) which he would sell the minister at twelve dollars.

Incidental expenses, too, were larger than he expected. There was more transient company than at Millville. Travelling ministers and agents made frequent calls on his hospitality, which was always tendered without grudging. Mrs. Eaton, who lived opposite, and noted the many calls, said to Mrs. Vernon, "You keep the ministers too well, — I know you do, — or they would not come so often." Mrs. Plympton, on the other side, was greatly concerned about the large washings hung out from the parsonage, and tried to sympathize with

Mabel; but the girl was too affectionately and gratefully devoted to her employers, to be made uneasy or untrue. So she reported the thing to Mrs. Vernon, with the comment, "If she thinks the washing too large, she might once in a while take an agent, and make the line of sheets and pillow-cases shorter."

The cause of temperance needed a vigorous impulse. The people wished to hear some popular reformed inebriates. They were highly entertained; but the lecturer, of course, must be taken care of at the parsonage. If the minister asked how the man was to be paid, he was told, by subscription; — "they would attend to it, and hand in the money in the morning." Waiting till the last minute, he would give the lecturer a three or a five, or a larger bill, from his own purse. By-and-by there would come in half or two thirds the sum, in shilling contributions, from a few of the nearest temperance men. When he spoke of the deficit to the deacons, they were very sorry, but they had done their part. And after a while, he took the cool advice they gave him, and learned "to be careful." Yet, what pastor does not feel for the reputation of his people, and will not sometimes empty his purse of its last shilling, rather than have their meanness reported abroad? Mr. Briggs was president of the temperance organization; a man too prominent to be overlooked. His buildings made as imposing an array as any in the village. His dwelling-house and grocery were near the green, and his fine grist-mill a few rods back, on the same turbulent stream that, a little higher up, dashed by the parsonage. Mr. Briggs was pronounced "a good liver," and "well to do in the world;" but, for some reason, he was far from being liberal in his intercourse with the minister. On one occasion, he offered to take the temperance agent for the night, but left his horse to be cared for at the parsonage.

In the evening, Master Edward was sent to the mill for half bushel of oats, which the gentleman had requested for his steed, and returned, saying, "Mr. Briggs took thirty cents for

them, uncle, though he knew they were for the lecturer's horse." Was this avarice, or thoughtlessness? The minister could not determine.

The annual payment, from Salem, came in due season. Mary said to herself, "Six months more, and we shall be able to redeem the piano." And her heart bounded at the thought of the old familiar music. But the year ended, and there was not a dollar left.

"I would tell them, frankly, Edward, that we cannot live on five hundred dollars."

"Not quite yet, my dear," was the reply; "let us try it another year."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Secret griefs and silent joys; thorns in the flesh, and cordials for the spirit."

After a lapse of three years and a half, let us look again into that quiet valley, and see if we recognize the parsonage. It is still in the old place, and it is the same plain building as ever; but its surroundings give it a totally different aspect. That luxuriant growth of trees! one can hardly believe it the work of scarce five years. But, then, they were not very small when transplanted hither; they were selected and nurtured with care; they have sped their growth, as if in sympathy with the brief, swiftly-run race of him who tends them. The honeysuckle, brought from Mayfield, covers the green lattice at the front entrance. The grape-vine, at the other door, has outgrown its white trellis, and spread itself on the kitchen roof. The sweet-briar has climbed to the chamber windows, and a yard of roses, in numberless variety, perfumes all the summer air. The stubborn garden has been subdued, and though it can spare little room for the beautiful, that is well improved

Witness the tasteful arbor, and the flower-bordered walks. Many a parishioner, who would have looked enviously at these adornings, had the minister owned the place, smiled complacently, as he saw the property of the parish rising in value, without cost to the society.

But let us look within the doors, and see what changes time hath wrought there. In that pleasant back room, whose windows command the wide mountain range, and which is dining-room, sitting-room, school-room, and nursery, we find the same presiding spirit, — the patient, cheerful, efficient wife and mother, still young and gentle, and scarce more matronly than when we saw her last, though to her maternal charge has been added the gift of two sweet babes.

Rose is a little gypsy, of three years, with dark eyes and curling hair, — her mother in miniature. The baby, of six months, in the cradle, whose little head begins to look golden in the sunlight, is the dear remembrancer of buried treasures.

"I suppose," said the kind Mrs. Rogers, "you will name her for the child you lost?"

"O, no!" said Mrs. Vernon, calmly; "we cannot have two of the same name in the family. My angel-child is not lost to *me*. The children, too, feel that they have a sister Abby, though she has gone to a happier home than theirs."

But there was a name, precious for her sake who bore it, — associated, too, with the memory of her first-born; and when this tiny babe opened a pair of large, blue eyes, in the same languid way as those she so well remembered, she overlooked Mr. Wood's estrangement, and called it Carrie.

Allison is now a fine, studious boy of seven, and cousin Edward is a tall, manly lad of fourteen. But where is Nelly, the restless, active, inquisitive Millville baby? She must be now a girl of five years. Yes; but she has, for the present, another home. Her city aunt has married again, — married a rich, miserly man, without children; and she has offered to adopt her namesake. And could these parents, with their

views of parental responsibility, and their tender sensibilities, give away the child? No, indeed, — especially to such a guardian; and such a child as Ellen, sensitive and impetuous, needing peculiar wisdom in her discipline and training. Yet, in the circumstances, they let her go for a few weeks. The children all had the whooping-cough. The mother's cares, present and *prospective*, urged the acceptance of any relief. Dr. Reed recommended a change of air for the child, whose lungs were enfeebled. So, with many fears, and much weeping in secret places, and such prayers as only a mother can offer, Mary parted with the child, as she hoped, for a brief season. It was now a year, and the way was not open for its return.

Mabel Ellis, with her large, open face, is still the faithful domestic, — able, now, to take the daily routine of a house-keeper's duties. Yet even this bright spot has a hovering shadow. Mabel has an indolent, wicked father, who would make his child's labor available to his self-indulgence. More than two years ago he came to see if she could help him, and peremptorily forbade her staying at the parsonage without wages. To retain her, her kind benefactors, who had sheltered and clothed and schooled her, when she was of little use, were now obliged to pay her a dollar a week for her services. Her father, too, was ever and anon sending for her wages, and threatening to place her in a factory. The girl bore herself nobly in these trials. She wept at receiving wages from those who had supplied to her the place of parents, and whose dwelling was the only happy home she had ever known. Poor child! she, too, had been matured in the furnace. She promised Mrs. Vernon that she would not leave her while she could possibly avoid it; and for this end she stinted her wardrobe, that her unnatural parent might be satisfied with the sums saved from her wages, and let her remain. Such fruit of her careful nurture was, to Mary, a source of rich joy.

And how goes life with the dominie himself, through these passing years? He is gradually regaining his health, and slowly

recovering his mental elasticity and vigor. He has not written many sermons, but he has gathered materials for future usefulness and activity. He is a better man than he was. The fruit of chastisement has at length ripened. Those deep furrows of his soul, through which the ploughshare tore, and the fire burned, irrigated by copious tears, under the blessed sunlight of Heaven, are covered with springing verdure, and gemmed with lowly flowers.

Success has early crowned his labors. Many precious youth and a few souls in maturer years, have embraced the offers of mercy, and been gathered into the Saviour's fold. He has evidently gained a strong hold of the community. Those who turn away from his message respect and honor *him* as a man and a Christian. His example and intercourse, out of the pulpit, have done much for the Gospel, in their influence on worldly minds. Were Deacon Slocum here, he would doubtless reiterate his judgment, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!"

The philosophy of the thing is very obvious. Religious men in Olney, with few exceptions, were sharp, close, selfish men in their business transactions. They were particularly tenacious of their secular rights, pursuing a lawful claim to the uttermost farthing. They were, apparently, as eager to get and to save as the most acknowledged worldlings around them. In their charities, too, — though their motives were not to be impeached, — though they gave from principle and conscience, — their standard of liberality was so low as to be often overreached by some who professed not to be governed by the great law of benevolence. Then, again, there was, among Christian people so little pains-taking and self-denial, to promote the welfare of others and the public good, that religion missed one of its best letters of commendation to the conscience of unbelievers. What marvel that in such a community a minister of good pulpit talents, who was liberal-minded, warm-hearted, open-handed, self-sacrificing, and courteous, — in short, a Christian gentle-

man, — should win favor for himself and his office, in the eyes of intelligent, moral men of the world?

But thus much was not gained without loss in another direction. Mr. Vernon had not been in Olney a twelvemonth, when he found out the besetting sin of his prominent religious men. Nor did another twelvemonth pass ere he made the discovery that they were a people of more ample pecuniary resources than he had supposed. While he was yearly expending a hundred dollars of his former savings, to eke out his living, it did not add to his equanimity to learn that the people were abundantly able to place him above solicitude, in regard to temporal things, — that scarcely a farmer in his parish but had money at interest, snugly invested, and yearly increasing, — that, above all, the society had an ample fund, provided by their fathers, which paid two thirds of the salary.

Stimulated by these facts, he brought the Gospel to bear on the reigning selfishness of the community, urging, especially on the church, the duty of a larger liberality, and a more unselfish devotion to the Redeemer's cause. He was earnest, and sanguine of success, — expecting, by the divine blessing, to bring about a speedy change. After those revival scenes, in which the brethren, borne along by his ardor, went beyond themselves, and worked with some efficiency by his side, he said to Mary, "What a pity, that so good a man as Deacon Hyde should be so penurious! He might have twice, yes, *thrice*, the power, in this community, if he were only a generous, liberal soul. I believe I can make him see it, and bring him up to a higher standard. I am sure the inconsistency only needs to be set before him, as *I* see it, to make him ashamed of himself."

Ah, young minister! sooner than be ashamed of himself, he will be offended with thee. Thou dost forget the power of long habit, of a life's growth. Go, and take the twist out of the gnarled oak! Hadst thou begun twenty years ago, thou mightst have moulded these disciples after thine own enlarged views; but now, when that head begins to be silvered with age, thou

mayst modify, but thou canst not revolutionize, the inner man. "Set the matter before him!" He will see things through his own glasses, till he reaches a world of perfect vision.

But Mr. Vernon meant to discharge his duty, and he made this theme a prominent one in dividing the word. He only sowed the seeds of future harvests, to be reaped by others, after he had gone to his reward.

The result was what might have been anticipated from human infirmity. Deacon Hyde inwardly chafed under the close application of such Gospel truth. He resolved to know the minister's opinion of him; and so he asked him plainly, and was candidly answered. He felt unappreciated, and thought he was harshly judged. He was a man that brooded over wrongs, real or fancied. He liked many things in the minister, but this one bitter pill made the whole distasteful. He thought he was willing to do his part, and was always alleging this. He was told this was not enough; he must not measure himself by others; that Bible liberality supplied others' lack of service by more abundant sacrifices and offerings. This was hard doctrine. It exasperated the good deacon so much that he forgot truth, and the respect due to his pastor, so far as to reply, "I believe *I give* as much as *my minister*." As truly might one of those respectable Jews, whom Jesus watched, have cast a *mite* into the treasury, and assured the poor widow that he had given as much as she. Not unlikely Mr. Vernon pushed the truth too hard. He was fallible, like other men. Mary once said to him, "I wish you would not allude to the subject of 'giving,' for two months to come. Deacon Hyde looks so troubled."

But the disquiet of this influential man was not infectious in the parish, though the same illiberality was prevalent. The people had not been in the habit of doing much for a minister. Donations were few and far between. Exact remuneration was asked for little services, for which a Salem parishioner would have felt hurt by the offer of payment.

At the expiration of the second year, Mr. Vernon called

together Esquire Eaton, Mr. Briggs, and the deacons, to make known his pecuniary circumstances. They seemed surprised. Deacon Hyde told him he had nothing to complain of in the way of salary; and Esquire Eaton hoped he would not make the matter more public, or take any steps about it at present; — "there was talk of getting him a year's supply of wood, and some had spoken of a donation party."

The third year, filled up with deeds of steady devotion to the spiritual interest of the people, rolled away. A few individuals sent in a chicken apiece at thanksgiving; and a spare-rib at the pork season; and a few balls of butter at New-Year's. But, as to the "wood-bee," and "donation-party," there was no one to set the thing forward, — taking the lead; and certain persons were careful not to encourage so dangerous a precedent in the parish.

In looking back upon the varied experience of more than four years, we find many a passage, over which it were good to linger. The revival and its consequents teemed with touching incident, sad and joyous: commingled disappointment, and hope. The pastor's own household shared largely in the blessing. Edward and Mabel were hopeful subjects of renewing grace, while the thoughtful Allie developed largely that love for religious things, which seemed very early implanted in his heart. Some bitter disappointments, too, attended "the work."

Mr. Douglass, a widower, with five daughters, lived in a substantial farm-house, a mile east of the village; — a man in easy circumstances, of more liberal views, in the culture of his children, than generally prevailed in Olney. His daughters had improved their advantages, and formed a most interesting group, — fair, yet frail, inheriting from their mother the seeds of early decline. Under the preaching of the new pastor, they were among the first to manifest special emotion. His heart was greatly interested in them, and he labored unsparingly for their salvation. Yet the season of merciful visitation passed, and left them still out of the fold.

At the village inn, there boarded a Mrs. Upton, and her son, who was clerk in Mr. Briggs' temperance grocery. She was a native of the place, who had returned after an absence of many years, widowed and poor, with her only child, to die in this beautiful spot, and be buried beside her father and mother. Between her and the minister's family there sprung up a sweet and congenial friendship. Frank Upton was an open, ardent, impulsive youth of nineteen, well educated for business, of a genial, social temperament, and a generous heart. Mr. Vernon loved the young man, and won his affection in return. When one and another of the dear youth of his charge gave their hearts to God, his soul yearned over this young man, with longings that would take no denial. Gay companionships kept him aloof from the cross. His mother wept, and pleaded, and warned in the hollow voice of the sepulchre. The pastor and his wife set apart for him special seasons of prayer. At length, his heart seemed suddenly to yield, and he consecrated himself to the service of Christ. Very pleasant, now, was the intercourse between him and his pastor. To young Upton, Mr Vernon spoke freely, and in confidence, of many things that would not have done for the public ear. Many a pleasant gift, too, did the family receive from the young clerk; — a paper of choice tea, or fine sugar; a basket of eggs, when they were scarce and dear; a keg of oysters, or a present of fruit. He seemed on the look-out to confer a favor; — and soon the pastor began to lean on him, and to see in him a future reformer and leader, — one who would help bear public burdens, and give a more liberal tone to the sentiment of the community. Alas! how often does God disappoint such hopes, — taking away the strong props on which his servants lean, lest they should trust in man, and make flesh their arm!

Frank was popular everywhere, — of good business tact, and winning address. The eagle-eyed proprietor of the large liquor establishment in the village offered him a good salary as accountant. The temptation was strong; the duties of the new

station were more congenial than to be boy-of-all-work at Mr Briggs' grocery. His mother, declining rapidly, needed all the comforts which the increased salary would procure her; and so he accepted the situation, against his pastor's advice and remonstrance. Expostulation, entreaty, and earnest prayers, followed him, as he fell into this snare of Satan, and was led away from Christian duty. The spirited youth was nettled by his pastor's plain-dealing; he soon became reserved with him, and at length passed him with cold, averted eye. The mother, meanwhile, attended by the most assiduous ministries of Mr. Vernon and Mary, went calmly down the dark valley, and was gathered unto her fathers. Was not here a tender chord, at whose touch the wanderer might be brought back? Again did kind admonition fall on unwilling ears. It was whispered that the young man occasionally partook of the social wine-cup. Ah! he knows not what tears are shed over his waywardness, by one who loved him as a child. And was the pastor *alone* in his efforts to reclaim and save? Was there not one, in all that Christian brotherhood, who saw the danger, and interposed to avert it? Enough who *saw*, but not one to *save*.

"If my case is so critical," said the young man, "why have not the deacons or some of the brethren spoken to me? I believe, sir, you are needlessly alarmed;" — and he turned away to make the minister's solicitude for him a jest in the bar-room and groggery.

"And he was one of your brightest converts," said Mary.

"Ah, yes!" was the reply; "I fear he was *mine*, and not the Lord's."

In view of this defection, the pastor said, with deep pathos, at the grave of another whom he had begotten in the Lord, — "O! the joy of a watchman for souls, when one, whom he has instrumentally brought into the fold of Christ, has finished his course, kept the faith, endured unto the end, and is safe from falling, eternally safe in the heavenly kingdom."

But he did not abandon the backslider; and the young man

felt uncomfortable in his position. At length, he resigned his place, and departed to a distant city. A tear stood in his eye, and his hand trembled, at the pastor's parting benediction.

Is there not many a pastor can say, with Bunyan, "If any who were awakened by my ministry, did, after that, fall back, I can truly say their loss hath been more to me than if my own children had been going to their grave. Nothing has gone so near me as that, unless the fear of the loss of my own salvation."

Later still, we find Mr. Vernon a frequent visitor at Mr. Douglass', on the hill-side. The rapid decline of two daughters, in quick succession, calls him for six months, almost weekly, to the farm-house. The lamb of the flock was taken first, and afterward the eldest daughter. The seed of truth, sown so diligently months before, now evinced its vitality, after much watering; a trembling death-bed hope left some ground of comfort to survivors. In this long season of affliction, the family leaned on their minister far more than on the physician. If there was any change, Mr. Vernon must be sent for. His wife, too, was often put in requisition. Many a delicacy did she prepare with her own hand for the invalids, — often, when the materials must be purchased for the occasion from her scanty purse. Mr. Douglass was grateful; so were the sorrowing sisters. They often said to the pastor, "The Lord reward you;" and to each other, "What should we do without Mr. and Mrs. Vernon?" Why did it never occur to the rich farmer, — with his orchards full of fruit, and his barns of hay and grain, and his larder of beef and pork, and his dairy of butter and cheese, — why did it not occur to him, that he could present the over-tasked and poorly-paid minister a substantial token of his gratitude and love? True, the pastor and his wife labored not for the sake of remuneration, — their favors were such as money would not have purchased, — yet, such a tribute, as a token of appreciation, would have made their eyes overflow with grateful tears.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

In this imperfect review of the first few years at Olney, we must not overlook the pleasures of intercourse with ministerial brethren. It was Mr. Vernon's happiness to find congenial souls in the ministry around him, whose frequent converse made many a green spot, and gilded many a dark cloud, in his pilgrimage.

There was father Bellamy, with the wisdom of age, and the experience of thirty years in pastoral life; with a heart full of sympathy, and a voice of counsel, unobtruded, yet ready whenever advice was sought. He began with a salary of four hundred, and a "settlement;" bought a farm with the latter, when land was cheap, which he diligently cultivated, and now has a handsome competence for his old age. He sometimes forgets how far the produce of the farm contributed to the support of his family, and almost wonders that there is so much complaint of the inadequacy of modern salaries.

When a brother was ordained, in the vicinity, with a living of four hundred and fifty dollars, the good old minister gave the charge to the young pastor, in which he shut him up in rather a narrow place, by the following injunctions: "Not to dissolve the relation while he lived; not to turn aside from his proper work to other pursuits; and, by all means, to live within his income." To some present, this charge seemed almost equivalent to an exhortation to commit suicide by slow starvation. The good father, when he thought of the salary, — larger than had sufficed him for many years, — forgot that there was with it no productive farm to furnish the staples of life. But he was a dear old gentleman "for a' that."

Next to him was the parish of brother Catlin, who, with his wife, had struggled eighteen years to serve in the Gospel, educate their four children, and keep out of debt, on a salary of five hundred and fifty dollars. He was the severe student, the chaste writer, the acceptable speaker, — dignified, grave, and taciturn. *She* was the prudent wife, the efficient mother, the literary woman, the Christian lady; — supplying to the parish *his* lack of social qualities, holding the pen of a ready writer, guiding her household affairs with discretion, keeping up a telegraphic communication with her husband's professional experience; — watching, toiling, trusting, with a flashing eye that no trials could dim, and a hope in her heart that many waters could not quench; — destined to finish her work ere her sun cross the meridian; the goodly tabernacle wearing fast by hard service, and consuming faster still under the intenser life within.

Further south lived, — O, rare exception! — the polished Mr. Williams, with his *rich* young wife, and beautiful as rich, and good as beautiful, — whose anonymous benefactions delicate as timely, carry joy to many a heart.

On the other side was the complacent Mr. Hill, with his happified look, and credulous heart, and corpulent, good-natured wife; both endowed with sensibilities less acute than most of the fraternity, thereby escaping many a heart-ache, — ay, and many a finer happiness, too, — blissfully ignorant of worldly wiles; not troubling their simple souls with the suspicion that their dear people can desire their removal, though certain hints to that effect were becoming frequent and emphatic. Their income was five hundred a year, with six children to feed, and clothe, and educate; and a widowed mother, whose only dependence was her son. What wonder that he was in debt?

Still nearer Olney was brother Merton, a fine, scholarly man, between thirty and forty, who was, at that mature age, unexpectedly caught in silken meshes, by a young, fairy-like creature, the most perfect child of nature in all that sisterhood.

Just over the mountain-gap was the latest accession to this

little band, Mr. Langdon. He was fresh from the seminary and the marriage altar; and, after a short hearing, received a call with an offer of five hundred and fifty dollars. He said, frankly, "I like the place, but I cannot think of living on that income." Another fifty was added, and the honest-hearted theologue replied again, "I might live on that, by much self-denial. If I were preaching the Gospel to a very poor people, I would be willing to forego comforts and make sacrifices. But here the case is different. None of *you* practise self-denial to *support* the Gospel, and I shall not deny *myself* the comforts of life *to preach it to you*. I will try on six hundred and fifty." This excess of frankness availed him more than the nicest prudence; and he was settled on his own terms, though they were a startling innovation on the customs of all the region.

One important member of the group is yet unmentioned. What circle of ministers is complete, without the *single* brother, verging toward bachelorhood? — the inconsistent soul, who now congratulates himself that he has no domestic chains to bind him; that he is free to come and go as he pleases; no wife or baby to intrude upon his study hours, or call him home at night-fall; and, anon, is in close conference with the mistress of some parsonage, declaring, if he knew of the *right one* in the wide world for him, he would win her, if he could. Such was Charles Herbert, who was a frequent and welcome guest at the Olney parsonage.

And so the circle was complete, — knit together in tender, sympathetic bonds. Had they not pledged each other the right hand of fellowship? It surely was something more than a name.

Those monthly meetings! what seasons of refreshing and of cheer! How valuable to the intellect, — how improving to the character, — how precious to the heart! "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." What trials were recounted, — what mercies rehearsed, — what per-

plexities solved, — what impulses given and strengthened in the common work, — what counsels interchanged, — what prayers conjoined, — what blessings evoked on Zion! The relaxation, too, of a lighter hour has its peculiar charm. What playfulness of fancy, — what pungency of wit, — what aptness of repartee, — what scintillations of thought, — what exuberant simplicity!

Nor were these occasions unfruitful of good to the wives of the brethren. Each, in her turn, spread the festive board, and caught many a moment of pleasant converse with the guests, and quietly enjoyed the whole, in her husband's joy.

Then there was the nearer intimacy of a smaller circle, drawn together by a peculiar congeniality, and cemented by frequent interviews, — the social visit, or the morning call. The two families who were bound in this close familiarity with the Vernons, were those of Mr. Catlin and Mr. Merton. It was very pleasant, every few weeks, to ride over to brother Catlin's, or receive a visit at the Olney parsonage. While the ministers discussed a leading article in the last "Review," or conferred upon a topic of debate at their next stated meeting, or opened some parish trouble for advice and sympathy, Mary prized highly the opportunity alone with Mrs. Catlin. She leaned on her as an elder sister, appealing to her judgment and Christian feeling with almost perfect confidence. Mrs. Catlin had not all Mrs. Vernon's feminine softness and grace; yet she surpassed her in energy and comprehensiveness. Her sphere of service was a warp of many threads and colors multiform, and complicated tissue; yet she kept the ends all in her hand, and the pattern in her eye, and carried the various processes along without confusion toward the finished web. After communion with such a spirit, Mary went to her daily tasks with fresh courage, and a more vivid sense of responsibility, and a more patient looking unto the end.

What Mrs. Catlin was to her, was Mary to Mrs. Merton, except that the latter made the largest demands for aid and

sympathy Living only three miles apart, they indulged the luxury of frequent interviews, and shared many a pleasure in common. Sweet Lucy Merton! Taken from the bosom of a loving circle, in a young city, and transplanted two hundred miles to a strange soil, many fears were entertained that her wise, sober husband, would not find her exactly an help-meet for him. But her very helplessness drew around her many a protecting arm. Because she had been tenderly reared, and was unused to responsibility, it did not follow that she would submit to no privation, and have no nerve for toil. "She was such a child!" said some. True, and she always will be, thank Heaven! if she live to threescore. A child of unaffected simplicity, large conscientiousness, and tender sensibilities, — true to nature, — with a face as changeful as an April day, — guided by instinct in her preferences, yet gentle and kind to all. She has two sweet babes, with a year between them, upon whom she seldom gazes without having her large blue eyes suffused with moisture, — so full and overflowing is the fountain of maternal tenderness. She was to Mary as a younger sister, — a pet, a darling to be cherished, and soothed, and guided, with affectionate consideration. In return, sister Lucy — as she asked to be called — regarded Mrs. Vernon with a mixture of love, and gratitude, and admiration, — wondering always if *she* should ever be as wise and good. Let them meet as often as they might, she had a question of duty ready for her oracle.

Mr. Merton, for the first two years of their life in Milton, kept from his young wife the fact that their expenditures exceeded their income. It pained his generous nature to make such a disclosure. When, at length, there was full confidence between them on this subject, she came to Olney for counsel. Sending her husband to Mr. Vernon in the study, she took Mary's hand, and said, "Let me go right through to your little snuggery. I must have a long talk with you."

So she drew a footstool to Mary's feet; and, sitting down,

looked up earnestly into her face, with the question, "I want to ask how you do to *live?* I thought we were as frugal as you; but we don't succeed at all."

"O!" said Mrs. Vernon, "our *salary* does not support us. We have other resources with which we make ourselves comfortable."

"Ah! then, perhaps, you would do as poorly as we, on the five hundred alone. But what remedy is there? Do we not live as close as we can?"

Mary smiled; and, smoothing back the hair from that fair forehead, replied, "Not *quite* as close as we might, — do we, sister Lucy? I know we have few luxuries. Our families are only comfortable; yet there are some *comforts* we could dispense with, if worse come to worst. The fund that ekes out our salary will soon be exhausted, and if we remain here on the same income, I foresee we shall have to devise expedients. It seems to me I shall contrive ways, rather than run in debt."

"O! is n't it too bad," said Lucy, "when our husbands work so devotedly, that the people do not give them enough to feed and clothe their families? But come, tell me where I can begin, in a closer economy."

"Why, sister Lucy, *I* cannot begin in *your* family."

"But do tell me, dear Mrs. Vernon, of some one thing you would do. You know how we manage."

"Well, if it were my own case, as it may be soon, I *could* dispense with tea, and coffee, and sweetmeats. I could make my pastry plainer, and season with molasses and allspice. I could give up all cake but gingerbread, except an occasional loaf sacred to company. I could mend my clothes a little closer, and turn them once more inside out; and I might sometimes keep no fire below, except in the kitchen, and thus save fuel."

"O! you are not serious, Mrs. Vernon?"

"Certainly, my dear," said Mary.

"And you advise me to this?" said Lucy with a martyr look of gathering resolution.

"Not necessarily," was the reply; "but I would do *something* to avoid debt. Cannot Mr. Merton think of some way? Why could he not take two or three lads from abroad to fit for college, if you were willing to have the care?"

Lucy clapped her hands. "That 's it! Why could we not have thought of it? It will do nicely. I can write to papa to find us some scholars. But, then," said she, with a laugh, "I must give up the retrenchment of table comforts, or the boys would complain of a design to starve them."

This brought up again the subject of economy, and Mrs. Vernon told Lucy that she had learned to be cautious of small outlays. "They seem trifling, and yet swell the amount of expenditure very rapidly. I now consider longer over a ribbon, or a bit of lace, than over some large purchase that seems indispensable. 'Many littles make a mickle.' Avoid the shilling outlays, which accumulate unawares."

"O! Mrs. Vernon," said her young friend; "do you know I am so sorry I have such good clothing? it makes so much talk."

"I would not hear all that is said about it."

"Ah! *you* could help it; but how can I? Nobody stands in awe of *me*. Those furs brother Charles sent me; and now I have a new bonnet from sister Helen, and Ada a merino coat embroidered with silk braid. I am sorry they were sent. What grieves me is, that when our people know that these are gifts, and that not one choice article I have came out of Mr. Merton's salary, they will have it that he cannot live, for my extravagance. Then, they make so many remarks about my dress. I am sure I do not bestow half the thought upon it myself. What would you do, my dear sister, — not mind what any of them say?"

Mary smiled, and answered, "Not exactly that, dear. You may get some useful hints from the well-meaning ladies around you;

as for the ill-disposed, I would not let their comments disturb my peace. In the matter of dress, you must depend mainly on your own views of propriety; which will not, of course, overlook the public sentiment around you. At Millville, I was complained of for not donning a more rich and fashionable attire. Some were ashamed to see their minister's family clothed so meanly. *Here*, where I dress more plainly, there has been some fault-finding the other way. In following my own tastes and judgment, I may have made some mistakes; but this degree of independence is safer than an effort to accommodate to the diverse standards of others."

At this stage of the conversation, the ladies heard their husbands' footsteps in the passage. Lucy intercepted their entrance with the entreaty, — "O, Mr. Vernon! do please, take my husband back to the study, and make him forget time half an hour longer; we have not finished our confab."

As they turned to go back, Mr. Merton said, "Remember, Lucy, I have a meeting to-night."

"Now we are quiet again," said the young wife, resuming er seat.

"I fear," said Mary, gently, "that I shall detain you too long, and your husband will be late at his meeting."

"O, how thoughtful you are!" replied Lucy; and she kissed the willing lips that stooped to hers, and said, with swimming eyes, and her quick little laugh, "How I wish some things were contagious, as well as others! I have some hope, however, that, living so near, *I* shall grow to be considerate too." Tripping half-way up the stairs, she told Mr. Merton she was ready; and adding, "Don't forget, now, Mrs. Vernon, the rest of that good advice, and come over as soon as ever you can," — again kissed good-night. But, while Mr. Merton was turning the carriage, she stepped back once more, to announce the important fact that baby Charlie had taken his first step in walking this very day.

As the door was again closed, Mary sighed, "Dear child!"

"Who? — Sister Lucy?" asked Edward; and, as he saw a tear in her eye, he drew her arm in his, and walked back to the fire, inquiring if she remembered a certain evening in the old library, at Mayfield, when she asked the meaning of a sigh similarly freighted? She recollected it well.

"Ah!" said he, "you understand it now; and so do I, better than I did then, or it would have been a *deeper* sigh, — a *groan!*"

"O, no!" said Mary; "no, Edward; say a *lighter* sigh — perchance, a *song*. Have not the joys far outweighed the griefs?"

CHAPTER XXXV.

"The daily martyrdom of patience shall not be wanting of reward."

"Duty is a prickly shrub, but its flower will be happiness and glory."

While the fifth year of the Olney settlement is rolling by, let us take closer note of some matters and things at the parsonage and in the parish.

The congregation has enlarged under Mr. Vernon's ministry. The society is bound together by many a new ligament, of which it is scarcely conscious. Unmistakable signs of prosperity appear on every hand. The principal men feel satisfied and very comfortable, — if we except some uneasiness at that repeated enforcement of liberality, which always hurts their feelings. The church is increasing in numbers; the pastor has his eye on the whole field; everything is snug, and under good cultivation; then they get good preaching, that keeps the audience awake, — and all for so small a remuneration. "They had rather hear their minister, by all odds, than that young Mr Langdon, to whom the neighboring parish pays six hundred and fifty; — they are very fortunate."

They can afford to compliment their minister handsomely. Mr. Rogers, — good honest soul, — hears the congratulations at the annual sale of pews, and volunteers to assure Mr. Vernon of the prosperous state of things. He drops in at the parsonage, to say that the slips never sold so rapidly before; and that their income will leave a balance in the treasury of fifty dollars, after all the annual expenses are met! The innocent man did not see that this was a two-edged compliment, or note how the pastor writhed under it. Was it so, then, that among all those pew-holders, there was not one to say, "This surplus belongs to our minister; it has been brought in by his faithful services, and should be added to his salary?" Not one.

Hester Allen, the dress-maker, was at the parsonage when Mr. Rogers called. Her cheek flushed, as, with the irony habitual to her, she said, "I suppose the society will not be able to devise any way of appropriating that fifty dollars."

"O, yes!" said Mr. Rogers; "I guess they will appropriate it to a singing-school."

It was generally known that the salary did not support the minister. Yet, Deacon Hyde inwardly rejoiced at the increasing demand for seats, as lessening the rent on single pews another year. If they all sold, they could be marked a little less.

In these days, it was becoming common for ministers to take a vacation of two or three Sabbaths, and leave the people to supply the pulpit. Mr. Vernon asked of his deacons the privilege of a Sabbath or two, that he might visit friends, and recruit.

They scowled and grumbled, and finally told him that, if he had a large society like Dr. B., or Mr. A., it might be reasonable; but his duties here were not burdensome. It surely could not be very fatiguing to look after so small a parish as Olney. Besides, as to relaxation, they believed the minister and his family rode about, now, more than any of the people.

Poor Mr. Vernon was confounded; he went home stung to the quick.

"Why did you not calmly reason the matter with them?" said Mary.

"It 's of no use," he replied "they cannot appreciate it. To argue the matter with such men, I must first find them, not brains, but sensibility. They would work a man to his utmost capacity, and half-starve him, meanwhile, with the smoothest self-complacency."

A like obtuseness existed with reference to Mrs. Vernon's labors. Because her duties were noiseless, and many of them out of sight, and made up of so many small contributions, putting in requisition the head and heart, as well as the hands, she was regarded by numbers as a person quite at leisure, living an easy life. It was often said, "I should think Mrs. Vernon might do this or that, as she keeps a girl."

"It 's nothing, I suppose," said Hester Allen, "to do the sewing for her whole family."

"It may be something, *as she does it*," said Mrs. White; "but *I* can't afford to put in so many stitches." If the work at the sewing society was incomplete, or wrongly done, who should attend to it but Mrs. Vernon? "What shall be done with this garment, made up inside out?" "*I* can't be troubled with it," says Mrs. Plympton; "some one who has the leisure, — looking hard at Mrs. Vernon, — had better take it home, and rectify it;" and they leave it in Mary's hands. There are times, too, when no place offers for a meeting. Mrs. C. cannot have it, because it is so warm, or Mrs. D. because it is so cold; but there is always a last resort, — they can go to the parsonage.

When the simple Milly Green, who knew only just enough to understand the offer of salvation, made her circuits of the neighborhood, it was sometimes convenient for some Christian lady to shorten her stay, by recommending her to go to the parsonage, and see if there were not something she could do for Mrs. Vernon. The hint was sure to take and, Milly, in her

simplicity, equally sure to report that Mrs. Eaton or Mrs. Briggs thought she had better come.

Mary had a simple but unfailing antidote for the bitterness of all such imposed burdens. Looking beyond human selfishness, she accepted the requisition, as from the Master whom she served, and discharged it heartily, as unto him. What though Milly's visits were disagreeable? — she was one of the Lord's little ones, and the service for his sake was light and its reward sure.

With all her trials at Olney, Mary's affections were intertwining here and there, and building up a nest, — a home for herself and loved ones. She found some kindred hearts, and had learned to bear patiently with the faults of these in whom she could see the image of her Lord. Her heart was tender and forgiving. She prayed earnestly to be kept from resentments, and found a growing readiness to extenuate unkindnesses, as the result of thoughtlessness and early prejudices. The obtuseness of the people, in respect to the temporal comfort of their minister, was, indeed, a grief to her; it was also a mystery. Yet, inasmuch as these trials came by her heavenly Father's appointment, she regarded less the second cause, and took them as part of the "all things" that should work for her good.

Edward, too, was approximating those serene heights, where the soul sits secure amid the storms of adversity, though by a more tempestuous course. He had now nearly expended his stock of sermons, and though he had some freedom in writing, — though he read, thought, investigated, and brought forth things new and old, — yet he suffered many a mental conflict, that consumed the day, and carried his labors far into the night. He could not content himself with superficial performances, though his elaborated discourses were seldom appreciated. On one occasion, having spent a fortnight on a single sermon, with much of his old enthusiasm in the study of truth, he was listened to with an eagerness and emotion quite unusual. For once, he

thought, the audience appreciate a well-wrought sermon. But lo! in the evening, a neighbor calls, and speaks of the discourse as prepared with special reference to a public event, — unknown to the minister, — that occurred the Friday previous! "It was," he said, "a capital hit."

"And so," said the pastor, after Mr. Briggs was gone, "they thought I planned and wrote that sermon in one day!"

During this twelvemonth, we find Mrs. Vernon adding a new task to her other toils. Mr. Ellis had again appeared, and demanded higher wages for Mabel, or she must leave "instanter." What could be done? They were already living on the strength of the last hundred that would accrue from the sale of their house. It would take all to pay off their yearly bills. But were there no perquisites that could add twenty-five cents to the girl's weekly wages? None but marriage fees, which were few and small. The farmers' sons were not cultivated on this point, here, as in "the hill country." A young man, whose father was worth a score of thousands, brought his bride to the parsonage, and was married for a dollar. A "two" or "three" was the average fee, though some, less able, gave more. Whatever it was, Edward always gave it to Mary; but, in these days, the act was a mere ceremony. She would lay it by, and, before many days, have occasion to smile, archly, at the inquiry, "My dear, have you any money in your purse?" as she yielded it, without a murmur, for some common necessary. This way there was no relief.

The people knew the strait, and some offered sympathy truly precious; yet none thought how easily a small contribution would set the matter at rest. Mrs. Plympton said, "*Miss* Vernon had been favored a good while, and ought not to complain." One neighbor volunteered the remark, to Mabel's father, that such a smart girl could command fifty cents more a week, anywhere else.

For her children's sake, Mary felt like making any sacrifices to avoid parting with one whom she had carefully trained, and

whose influence over them so nicely accorded with the parental discipline of the house. How could she expose her little ones to contact with low, unprincipled, or superstitious domestics?

At this juncture, Susan Brown, a favorite at the parsonage, ran in, to say to dear Mrs. Vernon, how she did hate to go away to school; and if she could only come and recite at the parsonage, how happy it would make her; and papa should pay as much as they pleased to ask. Upon this hint, Mary planned her course. Soon she had a class of eight young girls at her room, who, with Eddie and Allison, made up quite a school. Her strength was now tasked to the uttermost, and many inconveniences were undergone. Mabel did her part well, and tried to make things easy; but duties would jostle. There was a good deal of friction; and Edward felt that it was a cruel necessity which thus multiplied the duties of a sphere already overburdened. Yet the school flourished, and gave great satisfaction.

At the close of the first term, Deacon White called, and asked an interview with the mistress of the parsonage, saying there was much dissatisfaction with her teaching a private school. Was there, then, a latent spark of sensibility kindling at the reproachful fact, that what was withholden of adequate compensation from the minister must be toiled for, in another vocation, by his patient wife? Ah! this was not the trouble. Deacon White objected on a different ground, namely, the superior advantages of a few created jealousies among the people, and injured the primary school, by withdrawing patronage.

There was, in Olney, somewhat of the dog-in-the-manger spirit, or something worse, which said, "I do not choose to give my children advantages beyond a certain level; therefore my neighbor shall not do it for his, if I can prevent." In view of this unworthy feeling, the class at the parsonage was disbanded.

Mr. Vernon began, now, to think seriously of a new field of labor and yet his heart sunk within him, at the thought. If

he were to accomplish anything for the Redeemer's cause, — anything proportionate to his outfit and ability, — he must abide in one place long enough to carry out matured plans, and consummate his undertakings. It seemed so great a waste, — now, when fairly acquainted with the peculiarities of his field, with his hand on the springs of character, ready to operate to the best advantage; now, when he was really behind the scenes, and had a hold of men's consciences, and was established in their confidence, — to forsake this vantage-ground, and begin at the foundation elsewhere, while it will take years of like fidelity for his successor to reach his stand-point here; — this were, indeed, a double loss.

Another consideration, too, had its weight. This was his third settlement. Should he now remove again, would he not be marked as a man given to change, — roving and restless? From such a reputation his sensitive spirit recoiled; though he had observed that, of the brethren who won laurels for the gift of continuance, some outstayed their usefulness, and others endured evils from which a proper self-respect would bid them flee.

O! how often was this subject revolved by the anxious pastor and his helpmeet, late at evening, after the house was still, and the babes asleep, till the fire went out, and the lamp burned dim, leaving them as far as ever from a decision, yet nearer the source of comfort and strength, — their hearts bound, as with fresh cords, to the horns of the altar.

As the year that exhausts their capital draws towards its close, there is a necessity for some action. Mr. Vernon, at last, resolves to make to his people a formal disclosure of his pecuniary disabilities. It cost his independence something of a struggle; and such was his knowledge of the prevailing cupidity, he had little hope of its procuring relief. Yet it would, at least, prepare the way for his departure without blame. Mary, meanwhile, had more confidence in the moral sense and good feeling of the people. She was sure they would rally to the

relief of their pastor, when the case should be once clearly set before them. Edward always shook his head at this hopeful prediction, and she would retort playfully, "'According to thy faith, be it unto thee.'"

The important day arrived, and a goodly number was gathered, at the pastor's call, to hear his communication.

He told them, in few words, that when he received a call to settle among them, on a salary of five hundred dollars, he expressed the conviction that it was not a competent support. Yet he was then ignorant of the cost of living here, as well as their habits in regard to donations and private contributions. Hence he resolved to try. The result had been, as was known to most of them, that he had been obliged to add, from his own capital, a hundred dollars, yearly, to defray his ordinary current expenses. This reliance was now about exhausted. Unless some other provision could be made, he must soon involve himself in debt, or seek another field. He reminded them of his manner of life among them. He had devoted his whole ability, such as it was, to his professional work, not turning aside to any other pursuit. As to the *fruit* of his labors, his acknowledgments were due elsewhere, — even to Him who hath given the increase.

One thing he would say, — *the Gospel is a debtor to no people, neither is the support of its ministry a charity.*

If, for want of reflection, it seemed to any that five hundred dollars must be an ample support, he would go into particulars, and open the thing arithmetically. Figures will not lie.

	$500
There is, first, for house-rent,	$75
Horse-keeping (to say nothing of repairs on harness, carriage, &c.),	75
Domestic help, (board and wages,)	100
These three items take half the salary,	$250

before we come to the support of the pastor, his wife

and four children. Fifty dollars more $50

will barely cover the expense of fuel, lights, sermon-paper, and postage, $300

leaving, again, $200

or less than four dollars a week, to feed and clothe a family of six; to entertain company, and pay sickness bills; to buy books and periodicals, and educate the children; to meet incidental expenses, and the calls of systematic benevolence.

With this explanation, Mr. Vernon retired, expecting that the action of the society would be made known to him by their committee. But he waited in vain for *any* response to his communication, official or private. In the weeks that followed, rumor brought, by piece-meal, to his ear, the facts which no member of the society had the courage or courtesy to reveal to him.

It appeared that a motion was made, by Mr. Rogers, to add a hundred dollars to the salary; but it was defeated by various influences. Some thought it a hasty measure. Others, who were in favor of the thing, differed as to the mode of doing it, and had not largeness of soul enough to let relief come to the straitened minister, unless it could be rendered in their way. A few, beside, were strongly disinclined to the proposed increase of salary, partly from native penuriousness, and partly from a growing coldness toward a preacher who struck such blows at their selfish illiberality and sloth. Among them formal action was at an end. Many were disappointed, and agreed to help the minister, individually, by seasonable donations. For a few weeks, a stream of beneficence set toward the parsonage; but, like a spring freshet, it was soon exhausted. There was no native current in that direction, fed by perennial fountains. Esquire Eaton's amount of help was a load of chestnut wood, which reliable as his generosity, crackled and blazed, and soon was not. So acute and complex were the pastor's emotions, that it were difficult to tell whether these bounties gave him more pleasure

or pain A half-dozen individuals sent an offering of money, their fair proportion of the proposed addition to the salary.

Pastoral duties and sermon-making dragged heavily, at the parsonage, in these patience-trying circumstances. There was much wounded sensibility there, and some risings of "the old man," and earnest cries for deliverance from temptation, and a fresh pluming of faith's drooping wing, and an importunate turning of parched lips from broken cisterns to the living foun tain.

"What, though the springs of life were broke,
And flesh and heart should faint;
God is my soul's eternal rock,
The strength of every saint."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Ah! storms and wintry weather
Reign merciless and strong."

The months speed on, and our minister takes no steps toward a new field of labor. He is not the man to elbow his way amidst the aspirants for place. Indeed, he shrinks too sensitively from the mention of his name as a candidate abroad.

One evening, after a long reverie, he says to Mary, "I foresee we shall be compelled to stay in Olney another year. Our expenses, too, are increasing. What do you think of selling Pompey?"

Mary started, as from sudden pain, and said, "What could you do, Edward, without a horse?"

"I don't know," said he, "because I have not tried; but, I *do* know that I cannot live *with* one."

This opened the way for the pros and cons, and it was finally resolved to make the sacrifice.

The minister's fine horse had been often coveted. Many a

time he had been pointed at, with the half-envious remark "Our minister drives the best horse in town;" or, "There goes a horse worth a hundred and fifty, any day." But, as soon as it was known that Mr. Vernon wished to sell, the estimated value fell. True, Pompey had entered his teens, yet he had been used with care, and was as young as many a steed at ten. Mary entreated that he might not be sold to remain in Olney, lest the frequent sight of him, in other hands, should awaken too keen regrets. A business man would not have parted with him at less than a hundred dollars. But when did a poor, straitened minister ever sell an article at its maximum value? Advantage was taken of his necessity, and a contract closed for seventy.

The day he was to leave, Mary fed him with apples, from her own hand, which he took with an almost human look; — her last act of kindness to the noble animal, that had been as one of the family from its first organization until now. As his new owner led him away, Mary thought his coat had never shone so glossy black, or his neck arched so proudly, or his step pranced so gayly as now. She had tried to prepare the children for the sad event, and succeeded with all but Master Edward. Pompey was his special charge and pride; — how could he give him up?

Mr. Vernon went to his study in silence; and came down at length to dinner, with eyes that told a tale of weeping. Tears, long pent-up, took occasion of this opening of the sluices, to pour forth freely. The children got bravely through the dinner; but, afterwards, seeing her father look sadly out toward the empty stable, little Rose climbed his knee, and whispered, "Never mind, dear papa, we shall see Pompey again," — "in heaven," she was about to say, — but, suddenly recollecting, she added, "O, no! he has no soul, has he? poor, dear Pompey!" and the tears rained fast through her chubby fingers, with which she tried to hide them from papa.

When the time came for young Edward's recitation, he

entered the study without his books, holding a folded letter, and saying, "I have no lesson to-day, uncle. I have been writing to father and mother. Perhaps I ought to tell you," looking down, confused, "that I have asked them to let me come and live with them."

"What does this mean, Eddie? Shall I read the letter?"

"I did not write it, expecting you to see it, sir; but, you may as well. It will tell you my reasons." Here the poor boy choked with emotion.

"Shall I go down and read it with your aunt? I think she will have a word to say in this matter. You are her eldest son, you know," said Mr. Vernon, smiling fondly.

Eddie could not return the smile; he only said, "Auntie will think some of it is wrong and wicked; but, O, I could not help it! I could not help it!" The letter was not read without a renewal of tears. We copy it entire.

"OLNEY, February, 18—.

"MY DEAR PARENTS, —

"I fear you will be greatly disappointed, when I tell you I do not wish to stay any longer in Olney. It is not any fault in my uncle's family, and I hope not in myself. They have been very, very kind to me, and I love them with all my heart. But I do not think it would be right for me to stay here, and be a care and expense to them any more. They have taken a great deal of pains with me, and I know they do it cheerfully; but I have long felt that they were not able. I have noticed how close they had to calculate; — and now, don't you think, uncle has had to sell his horse to keep from running in debt! I cannot help crying about it. Poor, dear Pompey! I loved him, it seems to me, next best to dear little cousin Abby. I suppose I ought not to say that, exactly, and perhaps it is not just true. But, you know, dear parents, that I have been brought up with Pompey. O, I remember so well the first time I saw him at our old home in Norfield! And now to

think he is sold where I shall never see him again, — and all because the people here are too stingy to support their minister! Auntie would n't like it, if she knew I said that; but it 's true, any way. I am afraid you will think I have made a great ado about Pompey; but I have kept it to myself. Aunt Mary told me all about it, after they had concluded to sell him, before he was taken away. She said she relied on me to be brave and manly; 'for,' said she, 'your uncle is much grieved about it, and if he sees that it distresses you, it will make matters worse.' The tears were in her eyes all the while; — but she is so good! I expect she talked to the other children, too. After Pompey was really gone, Uncle Edward came down from the study to dinner, looking very sad, and Cousin Allie exchanged glances with his mother, and they tried to talk and laugh as though nothing had happened. But I must not fill up my paper with this. I want you to hear all my reasons for leaving here. This is the first one; because they are poor and troubled to live. Another is, they have cares enough without looking after me. It takes up a good deal of uncle's time to hear my recitations; but, most of the care comes upon auntie. She hears many of my lessons, and she is always watching over me, and doing something for me. And she has more than she ought to do, besides this. O, mother! I often remember what you said before I came here, that auntie must have an easy time, as she had no farm or dairy to take care of. I guess you would think differently, if you were here. I don't know of anybody that has so many cares. She has everything to attend to; yet she is so gentle, and patient, and loving, in it all! But you would be surprised at the change in her looks. Her face is so long and pale, and her eyes don't look half so dark as they used to. She keeps the same sweet smile yet; but I hardly ever hear her laugh now, as merrily as when she frolicked with me in the old yard. She has too much on her mind, and too much on her hands; and I ought not to tax her any longer. Another thing, — I know she is very anxious to

have Ellen home again; and, if I were away, I suspect they would take her from her aunt. I know she does n't have such training there as the rest of us do here, and I often think they feel unhappy about her.

"You will ask me, dear father and mother, where I will go to fit for college, if I leave uncle's. I hate to disappoint you, but I do not want to go to college. I know you have hoped I would follow Uncle Edward's steps, but I never shall be good enough to be a minister. And if I were, I *cannot* be a minister! *I am forever set against it!* I have seen too much how they are treated. Dear uncle and aunt have done a great deal of good, and they seem to take things — at least *auntie* does — very cheerfully; but it's too bad! I could n't stand it.

"There are some religious folks here, that I don't know about getting to heaven. I should n't much want to see them there. O, this is wrong! What would Aunt Mary say to it? You see, my dear parents, I am so much excited at thinking this all over — about Pompey's being sold, and about the other things — that you must make allowance for me.

"Please write soon, and tell me I may come out to you, and go to work on your new farm. I am in a great hurry to make some money, that I may help dear uncle and aunt, to whom I owe so much; though I am afraid they will wear out first. I want to be earning something for myself, too, just so that I may come and settle down here in old Olney, and show people how to support a minister. Give my love to the boys, and answer this soon.

"Your affectionate son,

"Edward."

We have not room for the process by which Mr. and Mrs. Vernon reached the affecting conclusion, that it was best for Edward to abandon a collegiate course, and seek an entrance into business. Mr. Vernon wrote immediately to his brother saying, — among other things, — "With the boy's present feel-

ings, it is of no use to urge him to the pursuit of a liberal education. Its rewards are slow, and he is impatient. But do not reproach him, dear James. He has, at the bottom, motives the most generous and disinterested. We love the boy with all our hearts, and know not how to give him up, — yet fear a permanent injury to him by a longer continuance here. It is sad that a spirit so young should be embittered, and confidence in Christian men shaken. I have not known, till now, what a strong under-current of feeling was gathering force in his bosom. Ah! it is a trying ordeal this, for older hearts than his. Well, let the boy have his way; he is about right, I believe. Who knows but he is raised up for this very purpose, to be a staff and comfort, by and by, to some otherwise fainting, famished minister?"

Mary grieved sore at this turn of things. Nothing had, in a long while, gone so near her heart. Much as she felt Ellen's absence, this was a harder trial still.

While waiting for his father's answer, Eddie's heart, too, often failed him. How could he leave these foster parents? — how part with the children? His aunt resolved, before he left, to correct some of his notions on the subject of the ministerial profession. He was quite ready to converse upon the topic. "I fear," said she, "that you are indulging some wrong views, as well as unchristian feeling, on this subject."

"I think, Aunt Mary, I ought to know something about it. I have lived with you in two places, and uncle has been treated so abusively, I could not help feeling as I expressed in my letter."

"But all parishes are not alike, Edward. There are places where the minister and his family are treated with the most tender consideration, — where the relation is mutually pleasant and satisfying; — he, ministering to their edification in spiritual things, and they, in return, providing all things needful for his temporal wants. True, there is not, anywhere, sufficient provision made for *accumulating* something against old age, or

disability. Yet there is many a minister whose passing wants are amply supplied; so that the question, What shall we eat? — or, What shall we drink? — or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? — does not follow him like his shadow, and fill his sermons with anxious interrogation points."

Edward smiled, and shook his head. "There must be such, I suppose, auntie, if you say so; but I guess they don't live about here, unless this new Mr. Langdon is one. Mr. Williams, though, is rich enough."

She resumed: "I cannot endure, my dear Edward, that your young heart should be so wrung for us, or that you should cherish bitterness and prejudice."

"It is not prejudice, auntie; have n't I seen?"

"I know, I know," said Mary, "you have seen many things that ought not to exist. God only knows how wrong they are, and how much suffering they occasion; but there are other things that help to counterbalance. There were some choice people in Millville. Here, likewise, you can look around, and count many kind-hearted Christian people. The narrow-mindedness, in many instances, is not the fault of the heart, but of early training and ignorance."

"Deacon Hyde is not an ignorant man," said Eddie; "he rode by, last night, to the west-district meeting, without offering to carry uncle, though he knew Pompey was sold, and he would have to walk two miles in the snow."

"Well, we will not talk of him now. Perhaps he feared, if he asked your uncle to ride once he would expect it again, till he would grow burdensome. I wish to call your attention to one thing which you seem to have overlooked. The trials are not all on one side. The people have *their* forbearance and patience tried with the *minister*."

"I thought all ministers were good men,' said the boy, hastily.

"Well, allowing that, my child, good men are imperfect, the best of them; and some of them have very glaring faults.

Why should not ministers, occasionally, be among this number? I know of a parish, not many miles distant, which has had a succession for fifteen years, of pastors with very serious defects of character. One was petulant and irritable, taking most things he met across the grain, and in his rashness berating his best friends. Another was endowed, as one of his good-natured people said, with every kind of sense but common sense. His poor judgment was always leading him into mistakes that he had not the skill to rectify; so that where he took two steps forward, in a good cause, he was sure to take one backward, his zeal surpassing his discretion. The third and last minister was the worst of the three, — a mean, parsimonious spirit, scandalizing religion by the reputation of being the closest man at a bargain in the parish. Yet, that patient, generous people, bore with the failings of their ministers, and kept them until they asked to be dismissed."

Edward clapped his hands. "I wish," said he, "you would leave Olney, and let these ministers be all settled *here*, in succession. I would n't care, though, if the stingy one were divided between Olney and Millville."

"O, Eddie, don't talk so! There is some occasion for forbearance with every minister. Your uncle has his infirmities."

"But that is no reason why he should not be paid for his services," said the honest boy. "Besides," — and his dark eye sparkled, — "if *ministers are* faulty, I guess their *wives* are pretty nearly perfect. I know one that is."

Mary involuntarily pressed the hand she held in hers; and the emotion, which his assumed playfulness was designed to conceal, burst forth in the passionate exclamation, "O! Aunt Mary, who will talk to me so lovingly and patiently, when I am far away from you? I am so hasty, and my feelings carry me to such extremes! But you never leave a matter, til you make me see the right and wrong of it. O! what shall I do without you?" And they wept together.

Another month brought the western letter. After saying

that the boy of course must come home; and that, after a six months' tug at clearing up western lands, he might be willing to resume his books and go to college, brother James spoke out with his wonted frankness, about the minister's position at Olney. "What has come over you, Ned, to stay and bear with such a people? You must have changed much, to endure this. But, don't flatter yourself, my dear fellow, that you have the general affection and confidence of the people. I can't believe it; there must be some covered mischief, — some secret antipathies. People who love and value a minister, do not act in this way. It would be a curious state of things, — with an ample fund, and with ability, as you say, to support the Gospel handsomely without it, — to let their minister expend all his own capital, and sell his horse, and drag on in poverty. No! — there is something, depend upon it, that you do not see; and I would advise you to get away from the place as quick as possible. We pity our home missionaries; but their four hundred is better here than your five. The public sentiment with you requires a minister to live in better style than with us. Your cloth must be finer, and not worn so close. Your house must have better furnishings, and your table more comforts; or, even your own people would make a buzzing about your ears, to say nothing of the ado of brother ministers and travelling agents. What would an agent do in Massachusetts, whose horse was left to eat post-meat, while he was fed on boiled rice, the only edible the parsonage contained? Such things happen here, and are put up with. But our New England folks, though they mean their minister shall practise a close economy, are not willing he shall be shabby, or rusty. They want the full tale of brick, even when they scrimp the straw."

"About my estimate among the people, I think brother James must be right," said Edward.

Mary replied, with unusual warmth, 'We have known the deacons did not like your independence and faithfulness; but I

cannot believe there is any secret disaffection through the parish. I know the body of the people love and honor you."

"Then why will they let us suffer?"

"They do not appreciate our situation, or realize what struggles and turns we make to live; then, *they do so love their money.*"

The day of young Edward's departure was a sad day at the parsonage. The sensitive boy covered his emotion under glowing pictures of the future. In four or five years he hoped to return with the first fruits of his industry, — perhaps a fine salary as clerk in a mercantile house, which was to be laid as a free-will offering at the feet of his benefactors. "And," said the vivacious boy, "when you look up street some day, and see a black horse coming, with a curious load in the rear, you may know that I have brought back Pompey, and redeemed the piano, and that we are all coming home together."

"I am afraid," said Allie, "that Pompey will be gray by that time."

"Well," resumed the young hero, "if he is too infirm for service, we will keep him for the sake of old times, and have a young horse besides, to draw the carriage."

"And a new rockaway?" said Allie.

"O, you ingenious castle-builders!" said Mr. Vernon.

"Ah! my dear boys," said Mary, "you are looking too far ahead. The future is all uncertain; but we know where to trust it, — do we not? — and cheerfully, too. All will be right."

"Well, auntie, in less than six years I shall be of age, and you see if I don't make a rich man; and I shall be your boy then, the same as now, and all shall be yours. Mabel, too, shall have something. Yes, you are one of the family, and I shall not forget;" and he kissed them each, and jumped into the stage-coach with all haste, not able to trust his self-restraint another moment.

Yes, noble boy! thou wilt, indeed, be rich and honorable.

So far, thy hopes are prophecies. But, when that consummation comes, these guardians of thy early days will be beyond the need of thy generous requital and filial ministries, wearing their angel robes and starry crown. They may, indeed, look down from thence, and bless thee for thy kindness to the orphans.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Each day shall see some task begun, —
Each evening see it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Shall win a night's repose."

It has been forcibly said, by Hugh Miller, that "*the climax* is a favorite figure in the book of Providence;" that "God speaks to us in his dispensations, and, in the more eloquent turns of his discourse, piles up instance upon instance with sublime and impressive profusion." The observation was recalled to us by a bird's-eye view of the course of things, the next eighteen months, at the Olney parsonage. We must be pardoned, if our portraiture crowd naked events together in unnatural proximity. The path is filled with incident. We have room only for jottings along the way, leaving those that follow us to add the drapery from their own fancy, and do their moralizing at leisure.

The first noticeable event, after young Edward's departure, is the return of little Ellen, according to his prediction. How those hearts had yearned for her these many months! and how often had the prayer been wafted on sighs that she might be kept "from the evil!" It was a cruel necessity — *earthward*, it was cruel — that removed the child, at that tender age and critical period, from the only forming influences that could reach her peculiar need. With tremulous thanksgivings, she

was again encircled in parental arms, whose fond pressure she warmly returned. Yet, the mother's quick eye soon read the whole. She was a petted child, and had sadly missed the nurture of the fold.

Now they have all the fledglings in the nest. There is comfort in that; though they must devise expedients to protect, and nourish, and train them there.

We have somewhere intimated that our Mary had the pen of a ready writer. One evening, as she was diligently mending a coat, which was Mr. Vernon's second-best, — taking out the facing of the skirts to make a new under half to each failing sleeve, supplying the cloth thus surreptitiously obtained, with the breadth of an alpaca dress, — her thoughts, with their wonted activity, resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means for the future.

Mabel was silently knitting, and rocking the cradle with her foot, — for Carrie, though fifteen months old, was a baby still, — when she was somewhat abruptly asked the question if she could take any more household care without being overtasked. Her hearty answer was, that she was well and strong, and could carry her daily work into the evening, if needful; and she respectfully suggested, if Mrs. Vernon thought it would help to keep boarders, she —

"No, Mabel, not that. I have thought of trying to write some little books for Sunday-school children; but then, I must leave Rose and Carrie more to you, and sometimes give up other cares."

"As to the house-work, I have no fears," said Mabel; "the children, too, I could have in the kitchen after Mondays. But, will you be paid for it, ma'am?"

Mrs. Vernon replied that it would bring in *something;* and every little now would help.

This arrangement was just beginning to move harmoniously, and promise well, as peremptory orders came from Millville for Mabel's immediate return to factory-life, where she could earn

two dollars a week, and board. This time there is no escape. The spirited girl is roused beyond the melting mood. Though her benefactors speak to her in tones more gentle and subdued; though the children surround her with their caresses and lamentations, she leaves with dry eyes, and a burning cheek, and compressed lips, and resolution in every rigid muscle, saying, "I shall be of age soon, and free to yield my service where I owe it. Then, if the Lord spare us, nothing shall keep me from you."

No new successor fills Mabel's vacant place. Mrs. Vernon resolves to get through the spring alone. Allie is a very considerate boy, — always ready to help his mother. Ellen can look after the baby some; and, when the weather is warmer, amuse her in the garden-arbor, or on the soft, green sward, before the kitchen window. Rose — her mother's girl — let her be where she will, is never in the way; the bright, happy, musical child, whose eye scarce sheds a tear that is not twin sister to a smile.

But what becomes of the effort at authorship? The evenings are getting short, and the name of household cares is Legion. We get glimpses now of the patient mistress of the parsonage, toiling by day, and writing by night; tasking and multiplying herself, as it were, to fill the various offices, that need each a perfect unit. To be maid-of-all-work in the kitchen, and receive guests in the parlor; to lead the female prayer-meeting weekly, the maternal meeting monthly; preside at the sewing-circle, call upon the sick, and, at the same time, ply her busy needle to make and mend for her own family; be the teacher of her own children, and her husband's counsellor and comforter; — what time will she get for writing, beyond her necessary correspondence? Yet, 'mid all these diverse occupations, her mind holds unbroken, from evening to evening, the thread of a simple story, which, borne on the printed page, shall fall, like healing leaves, in many a household group. Days and nights of not a moment's leisure, oft intervene to suspend its

progress; but her watchful eye seizes the first opportunity. The writing-case is opened, and the single lamp placed behind its sheltering lid, to screen the baby's face; — then she takes the pen, and, with one foot on the cradle, plies her task; nor heeds the growing lateness of the hour, so long as Edward is quietly at work above. It is late ere her head presses the pillow; and the busy brain, not obedient to the will, oft resists "tired nature's sweet restorer," making the night's repose shorter still. Ah! they who read the touching tale, or tender counsel, will never know what night-vigils wasted the strength, and helped cut short the life, of her who breathed her own sweet spirit into the warm lines that go so quick to the heart.

Pecuniary remuneration is slow and scanty. But, when it comes after a six months' waiting, — first a ten dollars, and then a five, and another ten, — how precious seems the treasure! How conscientiously, ay, how joyously, is one-tenth cast into the Lord's treasury, with tears of thanksgiving for the ability such as the rich cannot know! "O!" said a poor widow, "if I envy the rich, it is only for their ability to do good; it *must be so blessed to give.*"

In these days, we find passages like the following, in the little diary, whose entries were neither full nor frequent.

"*April.* — . . . . . It is not without some misgivings, and many a protest from Edward, that I have made this decision [to dispense with domestic help]. One thing, by the grace of God, I resolve, not to let my multiplied cares draw me away from the closet. Only there, are the sources of strength.

"*May.* — Have received to-day, a note signifying the acceptance of my first MS. by the Sabbath School Union. It has been my prayer, to-night, that the Lord would accompany this little book with his own blessing, to thousands of young hearts, long after the hand that penned it is cold in death.

"*May 20th.* — My cares the last few weeks, have been

numerous and trying. Have found no time to devote to my Journal, though I have enjoyed many precious seasons of communion with Heaven. Am somewhat encouraged to find, 'mid engrossing cares, that religious affection is more easily kindled than formerly. While my hands are engaged in worldly avocations, my desire is toward the Lord.

"*Evening.* — Feel very languid in body; — it seems as if this weary tabernacle were too weak to bear the tenant. Thought is most active, and feeling most intense, at these seasons of physical debility. I feel like a weary child, longing to recline on my heavenly Father's bosom, and hide beneath the shadow of his wing. 'So he giveth his beloved sleep.'

"*May 30th.* — Never so felt the need of wisdom and grace, to be an help-meet for an ambassador of Christ. My dear husband is struggling with discouragement. He received, to-day, an ungenerous retort from Deacon H., which cut him to the quick. I have had a great struggle with my own feelings. After much prayer and self-abasement, I can at last think kindly of the Christian brother, who manifested so little consideration and sympathy for his pastor. O! how little understood is the crushing, life-consuming nature of a minister's work! Lord, open the hearts of thine own children to a deeper appreciation of these things. Make *us* gentle and patient, in our intercourse with unreasonable men.

"If I know my own heart, I would merge every personal consideration in the desire to aid my dear husband in winning souls. I do take pleasure in denying myself for this end. O, that I may do it as to the Lord!

"*June 1st.* — Edward has been for 'help,' to-day. Has the promise of a young Irish girl after another week. I have, for days past, been wholly inadequate to the demands of my family; — feel that relaxation must come soon, or too late to save me from prostrating sickness. Physical debility interferes sadly with my comfort in religious duties. If I read my Bible, my head swims; when I close my eyes in prayer, I seem to be

mounting to the ceiling; if I pray aloud, the throbbing of my heart makes me so weary. Even desire must abate its intensity, or so fatigue the over-worn powers of nature, as to lose its sweetness. Yet, even now, there flits by me a glimpse of that bright land, whose inhabitant shall no more say, 'I am sick;' and the brief vision is like an angel strengthening me. O! for thy wings, thou dove!

> 'No more fatigue, no more distress,
> Nor sin, nor death, shall reach the place;
> No groans to mingle with the songs
> That warble from immortal tongues.'"

Soon is the prediction verified; the overtasked frame refuses further service; and the spheres, so faithfully filled, resign their occupant. A nervous fever baffles, for many days, the skill of physicians. Life at the parsonage wears a new aspect. The large, untidy Hibernian effects an entire metamorphosis of kitchen and pantry. Had the walls a tongue, they would cry out against such treatment. Strange faces meet us in the old familiar places, where we miss the well-known footstep with which the soft echoes always kept time. Sweet Julia Rogers is providentially there, devoting herself, with experienced tact, to the little flock, deprived of a mother's care. We may catch many a glimpse of her, strolling up the stream with her charge, or telling them stories in the arbor, or gathering pinks and roses in a nosegay for mama.

By the sick-bed, over which the angel of the covenant fans his wing soft as the breath of the June roses that wreathe the open window, ministers, in turn, many a precious friend. Little Lucy Merton is there twice a week, with her finger on her lip, lest she forget that her dear elder sister must not be worried with questions. Once and again has the sufferer's head been pillowed on Mrs. Catlin's bosom. Sister Ellen has watched a day and a night there, in her silk dressing-gown, and carried her namesake back to her city home. Kind neighbors have come in to aid; and some whose active sympathy was not

expected, have laid the pastor under a lasting debt of gratitude. Mrs. Plympton left her work to call once at the parsonage. Mr. and Mrs. Catlin were entering as she left, and she paused to speak with him, — the minister of her native parish. "She thought when she saw *Miss* Vernon undertaking so much, this would be the end on't. Ministers' wives, in these days, have n't much strength of constitution."

"That is a sensible, good woman," said Mr. Vernon, afterward; "but she *wants something*. What is it, brother Catlin?"

"Poor health, and six children," was the laconic reply.

Many prayers have ascended from the sick room, and some praises too; and there has been agonizing supplication in the room above — the pastor's study. Over, too, by the mountain-side, in widow Johnson's lowly cot, there has been earnest wrestling with God, to spare a life more precious than her own. The little crippled boy, whose in-door solitude has been oft relieved by a book from the minister's wife, comes ever and anon to ask if she is better, and to bring a trout that he has, by long patience, coaxed upon his hook. Letters from the dear Mayfield home are read, in whispered tones, by the invalid's pillow. This is Allie's privilege, the gentle boy, between whom and his mother there is the nicest sympathy.

With all these alleviations, there have been much exquisite suffering, and a silent dispensing with many comforts that money might have purchased; and an occasional relapse for want of attention, when Edward must take rest to be ready for the pulpit. And though the stroke, which many feared, is once more mercifully averted, the return to health is slow and interrupted. Yet, how happy is the family group in its restored treasure, though the dear one moves but feebly in her accustomed place! What an atmosphere of odorous graces fills the dwelling!

Still, the blood comes lazily to the cheek, and the step regains not its wonted elasticity. Dr. Reed is again consulted, and

earnestly advises change of air, — a sea-voyage, or an easy journey, with freedom from care. An easy prescription to make, an impracticable one to follow. Whence shall come the *means* for such a pursuit of health? How make provision for the duties of the wife and mother, accruing daily, and swelled by long arrears? Does any say, "How easily a purse might be made up among the people?" Ah! my innocent friend, this might be done in a *poor* parish, where money must be spared at personal sacrifice and privation; but expect not this of an able people, that have let their minister labor for them six years at his own charges.

Is it strange that the sensitive man, who would have given his own life to save the mother of his babes, dwells, with some bitterness of feeling, on the causes of his inability to employ a remedy that may restore bloom to the faded cheek, and vigor to the trembling nerves? Was it easy to give the hand warmly to his people? — to talk, and pray, and preach with whole-hearted freedom, under the vivid consciousness that their withholding of his lawful dues made his dwelling the abode of penury, and was wearing out his beloved companion in her prime?

It was not *easy;* yet, by God's grace, it must be done. The heart-burning must be repented of, and put away. Ah! how often would it return! Put it to your own case, ye men of loving hearts and ample means, who exhaust all remedies when a beloved wife or daughter — your heart's best treasure — seems about to be snatched from your embrace!

But resignation was at last attained, and afterward God sent relief and hope. Dr. Allison came for Mary, — a two days' journey in his family carriage, — and took her home; while Hester Allen — "the crusty old maid," as she was called by many — took her dress-making to the parsonage, and volunteered gratuitous care and oversight, in the mother's absence.

Turning now to Mary's Journal, we find the following entry:

"—— Once more in the dear home of my childhood. Sweet and tender are the associations that cluster around me here at even-tide, — the evening of the precious Sabbath. Have enjoyed, of late, unusual freedom in religious exercises; — known more of the meaning of that expression, 'liberty of the sons of God.' O, to be so united with Christ, that the currents of spiritual life shall flow through my soul, warm and free from their source!

"How freshly, to-night, does the view from my window recall to mind my early days, when this precious spot was the centre of my earthly affections and hopes! I seem to forget the responsibilities of my own household, and to be a child again, nestling under the protecting wing where I felt so safe during all the bright, peaceful days of my girlhood. But, the vision will not stay, — it is of the *past*, the *returnless* past. It can seem present only as I *dream*, or as memory and fancy hold me under their spell. And do I send a regretful thought after the ease and light-heartedness of those happy days? It is a momentary weakness. Life was meant for toil, and the more *severe* the *labor*, the *sweeter* will be the *rest;* the more *exhausting* the *care*, the *nearer* the *repose*. Welcome conflicts, then — welcome toils — welcome trials! — so that my God but give me grace to endure unto the end.

"—— Am still weak in body; my heart tender and subdued. It seems, at times, that I could, with but a short struggle, give up all earthly endearments, and stretch forth my arms to the heavenly rest. Have had a long, sweet talk with dear father in the library. I stood before the window, leaning against the sash, as I have done, O so often, in my girlhood! He came in and laid his hand tenderly on my head, and gazed with me at the golden clouds, behind which the sun had just gone down; then, kissing my forehead, said, 'O, my daughter, I begin to know something of the spirit's longings for that better land!' He went out, and I covered my face and wept; —

wept partly for joy, that the things above were so sweetly drawing him upward to their embrace.

"When afflicted, tempest-tossed, distressed, it is not much to choose death rather than life; but, in the midst of health, and friends, and worldly comforts, to turn, as it were, instinctively away, and desire to be with Christ, as something far better; this, *this* must give assurance of heirship and union with him, not to be mistaken.

"—— Take my pen once more to record a precious interview with my dear, good papa. He has reviewed, with me, all the way in which the Lord hath led me from my youth till now. It began by my speaking with some enthusiasm of my Salem home. 'O!' said he, 'I reckon you are always looking back to Salem, as the Hebrews did to the leeks and onions of Egypt. Do you not know that "distance lends enchantment to the view?" You had your trials there. The roses were not without their thorns, and you would have felt the pricks more, the more closely you had hugged them — the longer you had stayed.'

"From this playful beginning, we went over the whole ground together. Our trials at Millville; our poor remuneration at Olney; our loss of dear ones; our sicknesses and sorrows. He spoke of God's design in these dealings; raised me above human agencies, and bade me overlook the injustice of fellow-men, in gratitude to God for needed correction, which had been so evidently blessed to our growing piety and usefulness. (Ah! he does not see how our poor hearts, even now, *sometimes* rebel!) 'God,' said he, 'has been drawing you nearer to himself, by putting you into the furnace.' Then he encouraged me so sweetly, by showing that I had been instrumental of good in more ways than I had hitherto thought of. (O, if it may be so, how little seem the hardships!) He said he did not regret giving me away to Mr. Vernon. I had been just the woman for him. (My tears fell fast at this.) 'And now,' continued he, 'your sphere of usefulness is widening, in

your own family, and in the larger circle of your influence, and God is qualifying you more and more for your work; and though my heart sometimes, in view of your griefs, cries, "Spare my idols," yet, oftener, I can trust the hand that is leading you, as one more intelligently and tenderly considerate of your good than the fondest earthly parent. You will have strength for your day, and leave a memorial behind you in many hearts.' Afterwards, we talked cheerfully of little Alby and of other dear ones whom God has taken; and I shall never forget the emphasis with which he said, 'Soon, my daughter, if we live, the best, the larger part of our earthly treasures will have been transferred to that upper home; then, when there will be such precious *human* ties to draw us thitherward, how will our hearts abide on high!'

"I little thought of writing so much, and yet I have done no justice to the conversation. I must leave now, and pack my trunk for the morrow's journey. How my heart leaps at the thought of returning to my dear husband and children! The Lord still watch between them and me, while absent from each other."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching."

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

"Patience and sorrow strive
Which shall express her goodliest."

HAPPY in the return of his beloved, with increasing strength, and something of the old buoyancy of spirit, Mr. Vernon again finds his work easier, and his heart lighter. But the current

of time is setting fast toward the *annual rapids*, whose whirl will be stronger, and vortex deeper, this year, than ever before. He always expects to have "the blues" at pay-day. These yearly settlements are bad places to get by. He must then look the fact of insufficient support full in the face. The past year, with all their frugality, has brought some heavy extra expenses. He has incurred for himself a dentist's bill of fifteen dollars; and Dr. Reed's account, during Mary's long illness, ran up to twenty. The skilful doctor had an extensive practice, yet he did not hold, with the large number of benevolent men in his profession, that it was no loss to attend gratuitously upon the poor pastor's family.

The kitchen, with Irish "help," missed Mabel's frugal management, especially when the mistress of the house was laid aside. A new overcoat, too, has lately been added to the minister's slender wardrobe; and the price of bread-stuffs has risen materially the last ten months.

The pastor has a hidden, suppressed consciousness of these things, that makes him dread the day of settlement, though his purse has been empty these many weeks. But on it comes, bringing a season of extra *professional* cares, enough to bar out anything less strong than the besieger that gnaws through stone walls.

It is the first week in the year. He has a preparatory lecture for Friday, a sacramental discourse for Sabbath morning, and a New-Year's sermon for the second service, — to say nothing of the monthly concert, — all to be brought fresh from the mint, during the week, whose first secular day begins the year. His work is before him; and he selects his themes Sabbath evening. Let us follow him through the week, for though the scenes enacted are no new thing at the Olney parsonage, — nor, peradventure, at many another, — they may have the interest of novelty to some of our readers.

Monday, we said, was New-Year's day. The minister's salary is promptly paid. He spends the morning in looking over

his bills; and, after settling all within walking distance of his dwelling, sits him down at evening to commence his new-year's sermon. The text written, he holds his pen a half hour over the unsoiled page, till a deep sigh breaks his reverie, and he becomes aware that he has been devising expedients to meet the claims which he foresees will exceed the money in hand. This will not do. He again reads his text, and glances over his plan, yet is soon lost in a more troublous vision than before. He now flings aside the pen, and goes below. The little ones have been snugly pillowed, and Allie is learning his morrow's lesson at the same table where his mother is writing to her Nellie. The boy is sent up to the study, while Mr. Vernon consults with Mary about selling the carriage, her father's gift. The keeper of the livery-stable has once inquired after it, and would probably take it, if sold at a sacrifice. It will cover the account for horse-hire, which has been more than was anticipated; though the pastor has walked many a distance when poorly able, and his wife forbore, for the same reason, to ride, when her delicate health required the exercise.

But did not their Christian neighbors own such a useful animal as the horse? A dozen of them, at least, within half a mile; yet no one of them, except the straitened Mr. Rogers, ever offered to the pastor a word of sympathy, upon the sale of Pompey, or said, "Take my horse, occasionally, and welcome, when you wish to ride." It was whispered, indeed, that there was some secret murmuring, — that the minister patronized a livery stable when his own people had horses to let! (O! milk of human kindness, what has dried thee up?) But this digression is not to our purpose. Mary consents to part with the carriage, and Edward spends the rest of the evening in negotiating its sale for forty dollars.

Tuesday he goes to S., the large market-town, to make his annual payments there. Mary attends the sewing society, occupied just now in fitting out a box of clothing for a missionary station. Mrs. Deacon Hyde was quite active. She thinks

we might fill a large box, as almost every one has some article of dress laid by, that is of no use to themselves. "O!" said Hester Allen, in her impertinent way, "that 's the rule, is it, Mrs. Hyde, to give what you don't want and can't use yourself? From our minister's last missionary sermon, it appears *he* thinks there is not much virtue in giving, unless it costs us some self-denial. Do you remember the way he said, '*Give, till you feel it?*'"

Mrs. Hyde reddened. Her memory needed no refreshing. Mrs. Vernon looked deprecatingly at the dressmaker, and the topic was dropped. Presently little Susan Brown whispered, "Hester, how could you speak so plain?"

"I will tell you," said she. "Last fall I was sewing at the deacon's, when Mrs. Vernon's girl came in for a pint of milk, saying their cow had strayed from pasture, and they had none for tea. *That woman* measured the pint of milk, and took two cents! — then gave the girl a small bit of liver to carry home, saying, 'We have more than we can use ourselves.' And I could tell you meaner things than that." Well, well, Hester, it is not best. We would rather have you draw a veil over them. But you *may* say to the ladies what is in your heart, after Mrs. Vernon goes home. Ay, that she will, without anybody's leave; and the substance of it is this: that it is well to work and send comforts to the ambassadors of Christ in foreign lands; but rather *inconsistent* in a people who do nothing for their own minister, when he is more needy than the one they are aiding abroad.

"But," said Mrs. Eaton, "we would not like to offer Mrs. Vernon such gifts as many of these."

"Some of them, I guess, Mrs. Vernon would find use for. As for half this trumpery I don't suppose it 's worth the freight," was Hester's sharp retort.

"We don't know much about *poor* people in Olney," said the quiet Mrs. Rogers. "I often think there are not cases enough to keep our compassion alive, as a community."

"That 's true," said Hester; "but as to Mr. Vernon's family, nobody thinks they 're poor. If they had half the lights of their windows stuffed with old hats, and their children were ragged and dirty, they would get credit for poverty. It 's Mrs. Vernon's misfortune that she can make a little go so far, and keep up so good an appearance. She *will* mend by a thread so as to hide the seam, and as long as a garment holds together it is tidy and becoming."

"Well," said Mrs. Briggs, "*I* can hardly afford a velvet bonnet and silk coat."

"There it is again!" said Hester, impatiently; "you never have been told, I suppose, that the velvet was an old bonnet of her sister-in-law's, worn two seasons, which she altered herself; and the coat I helped her make, when she came back from Mayfield, out of an old dress she had before her marriage; and *if* we did n't turn, and take out, and set in, and darn, till I thought I could earn a new one in the time! But, doubtless it was great extravagance. If Mrs. Vernon was slovenly, or had as little sconce about dressing, as some folks, I guess you 'd see their poverty fast enough. The fact is, we are starving them out, and I hope they 'll go where they can be supported. With all her knack, she can't make things out of nothing, and it is fast coming to that."

"I could n't but think of it," said Mrs. Rogers, "when she came in this afternoon, looking so feeble, and I knew she had left so much to do at home; and she sat down here, and contrived, and worked so patiently, for that way-off Mr. Somebody. I declare, it went to my heart."

"She has never got over that fit of sickness," said Mrs. Plympton.

"*And never will!*" said Hester, with such startling emphasis that no one spoke again for ten minutes. But all this is by the by.

Let us follow Mary home, where she arrived in season to prepare a warm supper against Edward's return. She heaves a

sigh, as she finds herself listening involuntarily for Pompey's step. Has that sigh a little sharpness, pointed by half a murmur? It were not strange; she is not yet perfect.

It is late ere the traveller, warmed and fed, opens his packages from "town." Mary longs to ask, "How are we coming out, this year?"—but oft as the question rises to her lips, something checks its utterance. At last, with an equivocal smile, the largest package is unbound, with the exclamation, "See! I have bought some books."

"You were able to pay off, then?" said she, inquiringly.

"All we owe there," was the reply, with forced calmness; "but our house-rent is still unpaid, and there is not a cent left, — nothing for a new-year's toy for the baby."

"How happened this purchase of books, then?"

"I have long been famishing for them, Mary, and I have run in debt for food. My intellect will not submit to starvation. And, here are some for you."

"O, Edward!"

"I thought it all over; and it seemed of no use to try to live. We *cannot*, with all our economy; and I resolved no longer to deny myself these books, so needful in my profession I wonder half the ministers do not plunge into debt, reckless of consequences."

"You will feel differently, my dear, another day. You are tired and sad," said Mary; and her heart ached, O, so hard! Yet she interested herself in the books, and even thanked him for being so thoughtful of her, in the selection; while she inwardly resolved that hers should be carefully laid aside, to be returned the first opportunity.

After a night of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day, the minister kindled an early fire in his study, and addressed himself once more to the work of preparation for the Sabbath. But his soul was still the abode of tumultuous thoughts, which neither his chapter in the Greek Testament, nor his morning prayer in the closet, availed to quell. If, favored

with an idea upon his theme, he dipped his pen to write, there stalked between him and the paper the pressing query, "What will you do about the house-rent?" Whereupon followed burning cogitations, till his soul waxed hot, and he was driven, alarmed, to his knees for help. So fared it all that day. At night-fall he had only completed the introduction of his discourse, while his table was strown with many leaves of abortive effort. He must do something to free his mind before evening. After tea, he steps down the street to the treasurer of the Parsonage Company, with a statement of the circumstances, and asks if the rent can lie along; — is coolly told that the stockholders will expect their dividend. Not a word of sympathy — not an offer of private assistance — from Mr. Briggs. The money is borrowed of Esquire Eaton, and by seven o'clock the pastor is again in his study. But Satan went also, and stood up to tempt him. He thought of everything that went to aggravate his relations to the people. There rose to his view, not "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them," but all his trials and the sharpness of them, till his brain seemed on fire, and he came down to Mary to unburden his heart. "O!" said he, "how can I do anything heartily for such a people? I could go to Caffraria and preach the Gospel to the poor Hottentots, and feel happy in privations. But here they profess to appreciate the Gospel, and to reward a minister for his services, — while they do neither.

"I could go into a community where the wealth was in the hands of wicked men, and, with a few to stand by me, set up our banner in the name of the Lord, and live on bread and water, till the Gospel should win its victories from the ranks of the ungodly, and be able to support itself. But *here*, where the Lord's stewards have the means, yet leave his ambassador to suffer, all the sense of justice and honor within me rises up in revolt. Men of five, ten and twenty thousand dollars, adding to their capital yearly, and paying for their religious privileges four or five dollars a year! and, for the world's salva-

tion, the most liberal of them no more than another five! — and not willing to do more, when they know this does not make the Gospel laborer and his family comfortable! To say nothing of the morality of the thing, have I not reason to doubt the *affection* of such a people? It would be less intolerable, if they seemed to appreciate what I do for them; or, if they would take hold of the work themselves and help."

"Ah!" said Mary, "if they were to do that, they would soon provide liberally in *temporal* things. But you must not forget, Edward, the few who are helping by their prayers and godly example, — some precious sisters, at least."

"O!" replied he, "my heart yearns for the fellowship of those first days in the ministry. With one such man here a Deacon Ely, — his heart beating with mine, his shoulder braced to my own, considering the work *his* as truly as the pastor's, — I could rise above poverty, or the opposition of the world. The want of sympathy and coöperation from Christian men, kills me. These things ought to excite a righteous indignation, such as Jesus felt when he made the scourge in the temple. I confess I feel more than that. Ministers have their lower nature, as well as others. The old Adam in me takes advantage of this provocation to strive for the mastery. O! it is no light thing for a people to be the cause of such suffering as I have endured this week; and it is not the first, or the second time, either, only I believe I have not known before the '*depths* of Satan.'"

He was calmer now, and Mary began to insinuate words that might soothe and elevate. "*God* permits these afflictions There is no doubt but that his design is wise and merciful. Let us look simply at his hand, above proximate agencies. Let the instrument go unheeded, while we receive the evil meekly from him, and strive to apprehend his gracious intent in the correction. It is no small attainment to be prepared to be a sympathizing pastor. To this end, personal acquaintance with

grief is almost indispensable. Even the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering.

"As to appreciation and sympathy, we do not depend for these on fellow-worms. We can be content to be unappreciated here, so long as Christ understands us, and has a fellow-feeling for us. It is for him we labor. One smile of his outweighs all other commendation. To him we look for our reward; and O! is it not enough that he has promised it, at his coming? It will not be long to wait. Do our hearts crave *human* fellowship and sympathy? We surely have it, in our great High Priest. O, how often should we faint, but for the *humanity* of our divine Redeemer! He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; yet he has an almighty arm for our deliverance; — *human to feel, divine to aid;* faithful over all our failures and imperfections. What need we more? O, that tempted, desponding ministers would take to themselves the comfort of those precious things they say to others!"

"Ah!" said the pastor, "it is far easier to show others the way than to walk in it ourselves. While you are talking, Mary, I really seem to get above the darkness and clouds, into the serene light of the upper presence. But, alas! I have no wings to keep me up; and I sink, sink, into deep mire, where is no standing. God could carry us through the needful discipline of trial, without the aid of his people's injustice. This is the 'unkindest cut of all,' that we are bound to the rack, and tortured there by those that smile upon us, all unconscious of the wrong, and call themselves our brethren, and profess to be laboring in a common cause, and take the credit of paying us for our toil. Here is the sting."

"Yet there is balm even for that," said the gentle wife.

"O, that I could find it!" sighed he of the wounded spirit. "You have the same cause for bitterness, Mary. How do you get around it?"

She smiled, and said, "What panacea do you suppose I have that is not accessible to you? There are, I believe, several

ways to cure this heart-burning. When one will not avail, I try another. Sometimes I reason with myself after this fashion: 'You believe Deacon Hyde is a good man, in the main, — that, with all his selfishness, he has some grace, and is going to heaven. Well, be patient with him then, — *Jesus* has longer forbearance with *you*, — and love him *for what he will be*, when we all awake in Jesus' likeness. Anticipate the day, but just before us, when the scales shall fall from his eyes, and his soul be expanded in the atmosphere of that better world. Who knows but you and he will look back together on these very scenes, — *he* with astonishment and tender reprisals; *you*, with a better knowledge, forbidding his self-reproach, as did Joseph that of his brethren, in joy and gratitude, at the good a gracious God brought out of the evil?'"

"O, my dear, how you shame me! I will try, by God's grace, to do better." So they knelt, there, in prayer; and, for a few moments, light broke through the clouds. Presently it was dark again, — dark with thoughts of his own constitution undermined, and the companion of his youth drooping before his eyes, and his children, the dear lambs of the fold, turned, shelterless, on the cold common. Take heart, servant of God! Thou art not in the crucible for naught. Thy dross is being momently consumed. The vessel is fast meetening for the Master's use; preparing, also, unto glory. Be patient; — thy rest is near. But alas for those so dear to thee, when it comes!

Another day passes, and, though there is a lull of the warring elements, there is no final breaking up of the storm. The New-Year's sermon makes some progress, and the theme chosen for the lecture is abandoned for another, more pertinent to the times. If any feel curious, let them go to the church-vestry, and listen for themselves. The topic is Christian fellowship, and the preacher is without notes. We are just in season to catch the closing part of the application.

"Unless we can have some approximation toward this apos-

tolic ideal, we may as well disband, and give up our church organization. What do you know, brethren, — the majority of you, — what do you know of each other's joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, temptations and victories, as fellow-heirs of the common salvation? The *minister* is not to carry forward the work of God alone, while you each ply the needle, and keep the house, and drive the plough, and manage the shop, and make sure every one his gain from his quarter! You are to be co-workers with him, and with each other, and with the Master Builder. Now, what shall break down the separating walls, and let heart meet heart? What is needful to this coöperation and sympathy? Only *so* much painstaking as you are willing to bestow in forwarding your secular interests. Where is the community more busy and industrious, in life's common callings, than this? Where the church more isolated and indolent, in spiritual things? The fellowship of the saints, — that precious elementary doctrine of primitive piety, — one would think it, *here*, almost an exploded theory. Yet is there not more than one heart that craves it, — that cries out for it, — that will make sacrifices for so great a boon?

"Brethren, will you, *somehow*, open your hearts to one another; so that when you come around the Saviour's board you may come prepared to be conductors, as well as receivers, from on high, — with a union so complete that the electric fluid of heavenly love, finding you all in communication with each other and the vital Source, may circulate freely from heart to heart?"

The truth fell not powerless. Some heard it gladly; others could not bear it.

Mrs. Plympton thought it very severe. Mrs. Hyde said, if he thought that this was the way to bring the church to duty, he would find himself mistaken. Deacon Hyde's revenge is *silence*. He will let the minister terribly alone, and keep still, and act out his non-intercourse spirit, unless — which is very possible — God's grace bring him to a better mind.

Mr. Vernon asked Mary if he preached with bitterness.

"No, my dear," said his discriminating Mentor, "nothing of that; though you did use a lofty tone and vehemence, suggestive of the old prophets."

It is *Friday* night; and is the storm now at rest, and the sun shining in his strength? Alas! neither sun nor star has yet appeared; but *the wind has changed*, and it is blowing a gale. The tempted minister has let go of the *people*. He has enough to do with *himself*. The trouble is now betwen his own soul and his God.

Another day, — the last; and still he is tempest-tossed, and not comforted. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." It seems to Mary that her heart will break. Many a time does she go to her closet, — that little nook between the trundle-bed and her pillow, — and plead and weep, and tremble for the issue. It is the hour of rest; yet he comes not down. One more prayer, and she goes to her solitary couch, to hear him pacing the room above, under the plaint, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me." But this lasted not long. Soon the cloud lifts, and the proud waves are stayed. He knows what conjugal solicitude is keeping night-vigil on his account, and comes softly down, to say that he has found deliverance. The morning overtakes him in the study, at his Sabbath preparations, whence he comes forth, his face shining like Moses', and with feelings too tender for many words. How filial the spirit that leads the family worship, like a weaned child on its mother's bosom!

As he enters the pulpit, a whisper runs around, — "How pale our minister is, this morning!" "Looks sick." "Wonder what is the matter?" But this is soon forgotten, as he comes to them in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace.

Mary is surprised when he names the text and theme. It is not the same as he had said, early in the week. It was chosen after he had overcome temptation, and made his peace anew with God. It was "the mental sufferings of Christ," — a touch

ing theme, and handled with great power. The affectionate wife cannot repress her tears, as she sees, throughout the discourse, the imprint of the author's inner soul, and traces its workings up from the depths of distress and borders of despair, to a firm reliance on the Everlasting Arm. The week's experience is mirrored there, and it is inexpressibly affecting to her heart. The surging of the soul is stayed, — its tumultuous throbbings hushed; yet she can see the outline of the billows, as settled peace meets them at the word of Jesus. So, once, at that same word, was there a calm on Galilee; — not a smooth sea, but mountain waves, suddenly transfixed, — wild, yet quiet; contrasting the safety with the peril.

And how came on the New-Year's sermon? It was nearly finished, on paper; but as he looked it over, Sabbath noon, it seemed so cold and unattuned to his present mood that he flung it by, and, under the guidance of a sudden thought, turned to the passage, "God requireth that which is past." When the bell rung, for afternoon service, he had "a plan," upon a single page, from which he preached with an unction and power that told on many a heart.

"I wonder what has waked up our minister!" said Mr. Douglass, on the way home from service.

"I should think," said the eminently pious widow Johnson, "God had brought him out of some deep heart-trouble."

Days of prostrating sickness followed the excitement and exertion of New-Year's week; but the light of God's countenance made amends for all. Where, now, was the Deacon Ely, to take from the sick pastor all care of providing for the pulpit to pray and commune with him, to take his place in the field of pastoral effort? Alas! if Deacon Ely's mantle fell to earth, it did not drop at Olney. O, how does God's special presence lighten any sorrow! "Such views of Christ and redemption as I have had to-day," said Edward, "ought to give me an impulse that shall last a life-time. O, the goodness of God! what does he want, of any poor sinner, but that he give up his

heart, to be wrought upon and saved by this wonderful method of grace?" After two weeks, Mr. Vernon was again in the pulpit and around the parish. His preaching was very practical and mostly addressed to the professed children of God. Such texts as these followed each other: "We are not ignorant of his devices." — "Blessed is he that endureth temptation." — "A bruised reed will he not break." — "The victory that overcometh the world." — "Not every one that saith Lord, Lord." — "Repent, and do thy first works." — "Let it alone this year also, . . . after that thou mayst cut it down." The word was with power.

Miss Loomis, a poor invalid, sent for the sermon on "Christ's gentleness to afflicted souls;" and returned it with a note of thanks that brought the tears to the eyes of her pastor. "I think," said Mary, "you can submit to suffering, if it brings forth such fruit for others. Mr. Langdon told me, when he last exchanged with you, 'that he was at home everywhere in a minister's work, only among the sick and bereaved; he had always enjoyed firm health, and never lost near friends;' and, said he, 'I feel awkward, and don't know what to say.' It is a blessed privilege to be a son of consolation to God's afflicted children."

A poor hypochondriac, too, spoke of the discourse on *temptation* as "the only thing that ever reached his case; and he thought the minister must have looked into his heart." Ah! he had looked into his own very closely, — which is much the same thing; for, as in water face answereth to face, so doth the heart of man to man.

And now, as might be expected, the church awakes from her long slumber, and puts her mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Sinners flock to Christ; and the pastor, with tears of gratitude, exclaims, "Lord, what precious boon is this, and how undeserved at thy hands!" Meetings are multiplied, and, with them, the cares at the parsonage. The pastor's wife has many guests; — some who call to converse

with the minister, and wait his return from the tour of a district; others from distant neighborhoods, because it is good to be there, and a convenient place to stay over from meeting to meeting. The flour is at this time low, and there is no money in the purse. Mrs. Rogers saw the influx at the parsonage, and sent in a baking or two of rye. Good woman! "she did what she could."

"What shall we do?" said Mrs. Vernon to her husband, as he was starting for a meeting at the hill-side; "to-morrow is baking-day, and the barrel is out."

"I will see, to-morrow," was the reply; yet, somehow, he felt less solicitude than the case seemed to demand. By-and-by, the public carrier turned his team up the avenue to the parsonage, and, handing a letter to Mary, proceeded to lift out a barrel of superfine flour, which, he said, a merchant in town told him he had received an order to send to parson Vernon. Mary knew the writing well. Many a note had she received in that hand, years agone. It was from Frank Upton, the wanderer; and "in token of his pastor's former love and faithfulness to his soul." O! how many tears fell over that note! What flour ever made so sweet bread!

When Mr. Vernon knelt, that night, at his family altar, and thanked God for the hope that some precious souls had, that day, been brought to repentance, his joy, in view of these, began not to equal that with which he made mention of one who he had feared was spiritually dead, but has reason to think is alive again; who was lost, but is found. And so the word of God prospered. Even the deacons forgot their secret alienation from the pastor, and labored as he had never seen them before. "How tender are Deacon Hyde's prayers!" said widow Johnson; "I never knew before that he was so spiritual a man. The former minister used to think he did n't help much." And did the pastor, as he might, say a word to lessen this good opinion? Not a word. He was glad for the office'

sake, and for the individual's sake, that his reputation should advance.

These were, to Mr. Vernon and Mary, their happiest days, always excepting that three years at Salem, — and perhaps we ought not to except even those. Their joys, now set off by a dark counterpoise of grief, were the most precious and the purest they had ever tasted. God was setting his own seal to their labors. They had much evidence, too, that they had commended themselves with the Gospel, to every man's conscience in the sight of God; they had the public confidence, and the warm affection of many Christian hearts.

It is again the fatal month of March, and the shadow of a great bereavement is near. Without warning to divide the blow, there comes to Mary the heavy tidings of her father's sudden death. She reels, at first, under the terrible stroke, but soon is able to say, "It is the Lord! let him do what seemeth him good." To Him she flies as to the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Yet, how can she think of her childhood's home, as desolate, — as in the hands of strangers? That dear old home!

> "The sunlight seems to her eyes brighter there
> Than wheresoever else."

But, most of all, her dear father's counsel and sympathy, to which, 'mid all her trials, she has turned as to a green spot in the desert, — O! how can she miss this solace for the remainder of her pilgrimage!

They send for sister Harriet to come to them. She must stay and attend to the disposal of the personal estate; — and then, if God wills, her home shall be henceforth with them.

"Surely, there is comfort in that," said Edward.

"Yes," was the reply; yet faint, as if the heart had some misgiving. She would not utter it to him, but the thought was, "Sister Harriet has no idea how frugally we have to live; she cannot economize as *I* have."

But she did not come. By a singular coincidence of circum-

stances, — maiden of forty-five though she was, — she married, and left the old ancestral home in three months after her father went to his home in the skies. It was one of those stories of romance in real life that shame the fancy of the novelist. A poor, western minister, whom she had loved in early girlhood, came and asked her to be the mother of his six children, in their home toward the sun-setting.

It was a great aggravation of Mary's affliction, that she could not go with Edward to her father's funeral. There would have been a sorrowful satisfaction in looking at that dear face once more, though it wore the signet of death. How thankful was she, now, for that long, sweet visit in the autumn! Memory went back, and gathered up every incident, and daguerreotyped the whole anew upon her heart. That memorable talk by the library window! She feels again the tender pressure of the hand upon her head, and hears those stirring words, "O! my daughter, I begin to feel some spirit-longings for that better land!"

The March winds have but just given place to April's changeful days, when the feeble wail of young babyhood is again heard at the parsonage; and the father's heart is gladdened by taking in his arms a second boy. Little Willie is not strong as were his predecessors, yet, by careful nursing, he may some day outstrip the rest in health and stature. The mother, too, after many days, is gaining no strength; having been disappointed in her nurse, she is dependent on Milly Green, and the new, inexpert Hibernian. Mr. Vernon is full of parochial cares; guiding the young Christians of his flock, and looking still with diligence after some cases of inquiry that have not issued in hope. Mary misses many a delicacy that she would have once thought indispensable at such a season. It seems to her, also, that her constitution has no recuperative power; — that it would be *so easy just to lie down and die.* But presently there is a change. Instead of the dingy waiter, with tea and crackers, a little stand with a snow-white napkin, and the nicest little bit

of toast, and smoking broth, with a familiar flavor, and soft boiled custard for a dessert, is pressed against the pillow. Milly Green has disappeared. Allie stands at the foot-board with sparkling eye, reading his mother's altered look. The little girls are on the lounge in the room adjoining, whispering, with soft, pleasant hum, over new picture-books. Even the crying baby is taking a longer nap than usual; and now Mr. Vernon has come in with a brighter face than he has worn these many days. A quick, light step is passing in and out from nursery to kitchen; and it is very plain that Mabel has come back. When Allie found he had a brother, he could not forbear writing the news to Mabel; and, from the letter, she gleaned enough to know that her presence there would be sunshine in a dark place. So she pleaded with Mr. Walter for a three weeks' vacation; — and here she is, with money enough in her purse for any little dainty which can coax back a fugitive appetite.

But her presence and thoughtful care are more than all the comforts money can procure. Her three weeks were prolonged to five; for she would not leave till Mrs. Vernon was once more able to take the helm. And then, — ah! little did she think her visit was to end with tears! — the baby, who had begun to thrive, — whose growing intelligence was matter of daily joy in the infant circle, — the boy of eight weeks old, suddenly closed his violet eyes in their last sleep. And Mabel dressed him for the coffin, and they laid the little Willie 'mid the May flowers in the quiet church-yard, — and prattling Carrie is again the baby.

Edward grieved, more than Mary, over this bereavement. Lucy Merton looked on her own tiny babe, 'mid a rain of tears, and wondered Mrs. Vernon could be so calm and cheerful. But heaven seemed so near to Mary, and so many of her treasures were already there, — there was something so blessed in untried innocence, and God's will seemed so desirable and glorious, — she acquiesced without a murmur.

"It is very sweet to me," she said, as her husband was bemoaning the child, "very sweet to think of another darling safe in the heavenly home. Besides, Edward, it seemed to me such a long, weary way, to get him as far as Allie on the path of life."

Edward looked at her with concealed surprise. This was not like Mary. A sudden revelation flashed upon him. Can that bright spot in her cheek be the hectic flush, and is the vital energy almost spent? His heart would not tolerate the thought, and he resolutely turned unbeliever; — it could not be.

The spring has fairly opened, and Mr. Vernon decides to look for a new location. But, surely after the revival which has blessed so many families, his people will rally, and pour out freely of their temporal things, for one who has ministered so unsparingly in spiritual things. There has been some *talk* to this effect in the parish; but nothing is done, except that private benefactions have become more frequent.

Sister Harriet makes them a parting visit, and puts a hundred dollars into Mary's hands, saying, "There, pay off what you owe, and go where you can *live*."

"But what other place," said Mary, "can be *home* to me like this?"

Does it seem to you, dear reader, that life in Olney, — particularly for the last eighteen months, — has worn too sombre an aspect to admit of many regrets at the prospect of a removal? Ah! then we have failed to supply to you what has been present to our own experienced eyesight, — a diamond vein, running through the whole flinty quarry; a fringe of golden light bordering every leaden cloud; gleams of sunshine in the tangled wilderness; fresh water from the rock on desert sands; way-side greenness and bloom all along the dusty thoroughfare; and, more than all, vital heat suffused throughout the scene, reflecting a warm glow even where it cannot permeate, giving a rich coloring to the rugged, deeply-shaded landscape.

How often has Mary watched, from her window, the varying shadows on the mountain-side, as they emblem forth her chequered history! The sun is past the meridian, and April clouds are scudding low, or hanging in white masses, in the mid-heavens. Up, almost to the old summit ridge, is a slope covered with young ash and birch, whose tender foliage, as the sun shines brightly there, is of the most delectable green. Under the black o'erhanging cliffs, it nestles like a little Eden, the only spot of sunshine on all the mountain. Presently the changing clouds throw over it a pall; when, as the whole view seems dark and cold, a little lower down another spot of garden verdure, with green of a different hue, is mapped off by the sunlight; and when this, too, is veiled and lost, further on the evergreens suddenly stand out under a flood of refulgent light. Slowly then, as the eye returns, the pall lifts from the first fairy spot, yielding, however, to the glad sunshine only half the territory that was so beautiful at the beginning. Yet this looks brighter than before; and even the gray beetling cliffs adjacent soften as in sympathy with the restored joy. When this again is lost, the eye is surprised with patches of light and verdure, where they are least expected, — now, high up among the crags, and anon dancing along the mountain's base.

"How apt the similitude!" thought Mary; "snatches of sunshine all the way. Such, with me, has been life's kaleidoscope, — turned oft in tears, yet never in rayless night — never in unmitigated gloom. Ah! it is the shifting clouds and the changing earth that so variegate the picture. The light is ever the same.

——"Heaven smiles above,
Though storm and vapor intervene;
That sun shines on whose name is Love,
Serenely o'er life's shadowy scene."

CHAPTER XXXIX

"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? . . Who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn."

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"

Though Mr. Vernon's intellect and scholarly grace have not been fully appreciated in Olney, they have not been unnoted from without. His ministerial brethren understand his power; and, when it is known that he will seek another field, he is recommended as the man to build up a new enterprise in the suburbs of a distant city. He is sent for thither to preach a Sabbath; and, to avoid a stir among his people before the time, directs his supply to exchange pulpits with brother Langdon. Mr L. halted a moment at the parsonage, Saturday night, to say that he had taken a notion to stop over Sabbath with Captain Brown. Right welcome, too, was he made at the warm-hearted farmer's, in whose ear he resolved, before he left, to lodge some important truths.

It was Sabbath evening, and the fire blazed cheerfully in the capacious Franklin, before which sat the farmer in his arm-chair, the young minister in the Boston rocker, and Mrs. Brown. Susie had run over to the parsonage. A conversation much like the following ensued:

Mr. Langdon. How many families have you in the parish, Captain Brown?

Captain Brown. About a hundred, I believe, sir.

Mr. L. You have a fund, I am told. How much of the salary does it leave you to provide for from the pews?

Capt. B. A hundred and fifty, or thereabouts.

Mr. L. How much do your ablest men pay a year?

Capt. B. Well, I reckon the ablest don't pay the most There 's Esquire Eaton, — his property goes into the list for about thirty thousand; and Mr. Briggs, I suppose, is worth twenty. Sometimes they bid off a seat for two or three dollars; the highest are five, now, — they used to be seven or eight, but the congregation has increased.

Mr. L. And while you have been paying five and four and three dollars apiece, to support the Gospel here, your minister, it seems, has paid a hundred, besides giving himself! Is that honest?

Capt. B. (reddening). I don't think his salary is large enough, sir; but I believe there 's nothing *dishonest* about it. We give him what we agreed.

Mr. L. You pay him the nominal sum at which his support was rated; but does not the contract between you, from its nature, imply that, if he devote himself to your service in the ministry, you are to be responsible for his temporal wants, — to give him a comfortable support?

Capt. B. I suppose we are to give him what we promised.

Mr. L. But, underneath that promise, is there not a pledge — an *obligation*, at least — to provide all things needful for his bodily comfort, and his intellectual and social wants? You would be ashamed to say that you expected or desired a man to labor here in the ministry, partly at his own charges, when you are all aboveboard as to property, and made richer every year by the influence of religious institutions.

Capt. B. Well, we thought five hundred would do it.

Mr. L. And, when you were frankly told that it did not, what then? Did not honesty require you to add to it? Mr. Vernon, I am told, has to struggle with poverty, and live very closely.

Capt. B. *I* am willing to give him more. I am sorry for their troubles; yet, I suppose, really, my wife and I calculated about as close, when we began life.

Mrs. B. O, Mr. Brown, that was a very different thing!

We were not compelled to it. We did it, you know, for the sake of laying up.

Mr. L. Altogether different, sir. Suppose you had been at work with all your might for some one else, who kept back part of your earnings, and thus obliged you to deny yourselves common comforts, — would it have come as easy? The fact is, Captain Brown, half of you business men look upon us ministers as a set of poor fellows, that are glad to preach the Gospel for the sake of a living. It never seems to occur to you that we have relinquished or foregone business prospects bright as yours, with no more obligation to give them up than you, only as the command of Christ to preach his Gospel presses upon our conscience and heart. Why, just look, sir, at the clergy right around us here.

There 's Mr. Catlin, a man of finished education, might have made himself rich by teaching. He was tutor at Dartmouth, and was offered a professorship; but his heart was set on preaching, and there he has been at it these twenty years, — all the while struggling with poverty, and his wife writing books and turning every way to bring up their children.

Here, too, nearer still, is Mr. Merton, — a man whom all respect, — a thorough scholar, particularly skilled in astronomical science. The way was once open for him to a place in the National Observatory, with a salary of $2000; but he declined the tempting offer, and is trying to live on five hundred, fitting boys for college to make up a support. His people, I hear, are beginning to complain that he does n't write as good sermons as he did at first.

Capt. B. I suppose they do for him about what they are able.

Mr. L. Perhaps they do, according to the prevailing standard of ability. But let that pass. To speak of myself, next in order, I was offered by my uncle a salary of a thousand dollars to go into his store as clerk. And here is your Mr. Vernon, who gave up a profession in which, with his talents, he

might now be worth his thousands. And yet, I venture, there are people in this place who will give each other the wink, and say, "He 's glad enough to stay and work on, even for what we give him." He is glad to work for Christ, and look for his reward in heaven; but, as for feeling remunerated by the pittance you allow, were it not for the constraining love of Christ and the sustaining grace of God, he would fling it in your face, and wipe off the dust of his feet for a testimony against you.

Capt. B. I own it 's a shame we don't give him more; but our deacons are opposed to it, and it is hard carrying matters over their heads.

Mr. L. I should n't mind much about such heads. But I was about to say that the support of the Gospel is viewed too much as a *charity*. All these churches, whose preaching costs them the merest moiety of their income, are living comfortably themselves, educating their children, and increasing their possessions, and willing to pay an equivalent for everything they procure, except the Gospel! When they pay their lawyer, or doctor, or schoolmaster, or shoemaker, it is for value received, — a commercial operation; but when they pay their minister, it is a gratuity.

Capt. B. I never feel like that. I think the Gospel is worth all we pay for it, and more, too, even to our secular interests. Some are for making it up to Mr. Vernon in presents of produce; but my motto is, "Money answereth all things." I would give him salary enough to live on; then, if we want to make him presents, we can.

Mr. L. I hope you will not think I am giving *you* a lecture, Captain Brown. I know you are more candid in these matters than many men. I heard of a man, between this place and mine, who said he thought ten dollars a Sabbath was a great price for a minister to ask, for just preaching two sermons that he could write in a week. Now, this shows another thing overlooked. All these ministers have spent nine or ten of the best years of their life, and from one to two thousand dollars,

to *qualify* them to write these two sermons a week. Think what a lift the time and money thus consumed would have given them in some worldly calling. Now, if you estimate their labor on the mercantile principle, if you begin to talk about "what it 's worth," you must consider the *capital* they have invested in the business. Every week's labor, for ten years, has cost them a week's *preparation*, at their own charges. Now, instead of fixing the compensation on this principle, the question is, "What is the least our minister can live on?" And even here, he is not to be the judge and decide the question for himself. Yet, who so competent as he to tell? What is comfort for one, is not necessarily for another. Some farmers, captain, want twice the *tools* to work with that others do, and more to keep the pot boiling.

Capt. B. Just so, sir, — just so.

Mr. L. And you don't find it bad management to enrich the soil by an outlay, now and then, for plaster and guano.

"It pays," said the captain, rubbing his hands; "*it pays.*'

Mr. L. And it 's no great advantage to the farm, to scrimp the working cattle, or have the cows "spring-poor."

Capt. B. You hit it again, sir.

Mrs. B. I believe I said once that I thought a minister might live on five hundred dollars; but, when Mr. Vernon came to make his statement to the society, I thought more of it, and felt ashamed that I had ever said so. We ought to have confidence enough in our minister to trust him in such things. I have felt so sorry for them the past year. They have had so many trials, and they are so still about it, too. He preaches like an apostle, and she never complains.

Mr. L. Yet there are ministers — and in this county, too — poorer off than they. It is time the churches opened their eyes to this thing. There are fewer young men entering the ministry. They are appalled by the prospect of poor remuneration, and want of sympathy. Do you know Mr. Smith, of T., up back here on the mountain?

Capt. B. I have seen him once at a consociation.

Mr. L. Well, he is twelve miles from me, but I exchanged with him a while ago. He has six children, and a salary of four hundred dollars; and such destitution one would hardly believe, unless they saw. Mrs. S. said they could not send all the children to school together, because they could not clothe them all decently at a time. They had to take their turns. The church is small and poor, and is aided by our Domestic Missionary Society. I came home and told my wife about it; and she, with a few ladies, made up a little purse, and despatched by mail. I presume they will think it a "God-send."

Capt. B. Can't something be done for such cases?

Mr. L. The abler churches ought to relieve them. I was thinking it over yesterday. Now, what does Dr. N., of that great church in the city, with his nice house, his carpeted study, and easy chair, and convenient table, and grand library, — what does he know of such hardships as poor brother Smith suffers? Not that the doctor is a whit too well cared for. *He* has no provision for *old age*, but the promises. He must live as handsomely as the middle class in his congregation. But I would have him think of his poorer brethren. He might spare a few well-read books from his library, or a disused garment from his wardrobe. His church, too, with their munificent benefactions to benevolent objects—they are not doing a cent too much — but I would have them do a little more in another direction. When they get their thousand dollars together, for western colleges, let them throw down the odd change — fifty dollars, or twenty, as it may be — for that poor pastor on the mountain, so that his six children can be made decent, to go to school together. That would be apostolic, and after primitive fashion, would n't it, Captain Brown?

The captain is rather absorbed just now. "I am thinking," said he, "how we can get up this business of rising upon our minister's salary."

Mr. L. Nothing easier, sir. You just call a meeting, and make a motion to that effect, and —

Capt. B. I! *I* make a *motion?* I never did such a thing in my life. There 's Esquire Eaton, and Mr. Briggs, and the deacons. I? confound me, if I could!

CHAPTER XL.

"Partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
That ne'er might be repeated."

"'Tis a time
For memory, and for tears."

When Mr. Vernon's call from the suburban church reached the parsonage, Mary felt such a sinking of heart as she had seldom experienced. She just finds how deeply interwoven are the threads of her existence with the place and people. True, the arguments for leaving are strong and incontrovertible: his poor remuneration and want of sympathy here; — there, a larger field of usefulness and an ample support, with facilities for educating their children. She tries to keep down her swelling heart. Providence surely leads this way. It will give Edward some relief from his late exhausting night-studies, as he can avail himself of previous preparation. Ellen, too, can be theirs again; and she heaves a sigh that always escapes at the mention of the absent one. Brother William has signified his purpose to send his oldest child to his native land; and she has so longed to take it to the bosom of her own family. That wish can now be gratified. And, finally, 'mid the reviving of other buried hopes, that brings a quick flush to the cheek, comes the thought of her lost piano. This treasure might be hers again Ah! how had she missed the beloved music, those seven long years, — at the family devotions, at the social gath-

ering, in the lone evening, at times when her heart was heavy with grief, or swelling high with joy! Yet — heroic wife that she was — she had never worn her husband's sensitive heart-strings with a single regretful murmur or vain wish to recover the alienated treasure. The thrill of pleasure now, showed the greatness of the sacrifice.

But again comes the sad reäction of feeling. This is *home*. The affections are rooted all about this pleasant valley. The dwelling, too, in its rural beauty, — their hands have fashioned its adornments, and it has been sacred to their presence. It has been the birthplace of their little ones. The children can never know another home like this, — with the grassy path behind the garden to the quiet churchyard, traversed oft these summer days to carry flowers to the little mound where baby Willie sleeps. O! the breaking up of all these life-ties, of slow yet consolidated growth. With the tenderest care, how many roots will be cruelly severed, — how many branches amputated! What ligature can ever stop the bleeding?

Edward has laid his call before the people, and told them he had no wish to leave, if he could be supported here. A gleam of hope rises in Mary's bosom: they will increase his salary, — they will keep him yet.

There is much real sorrow among the people at thought of the separation. A large majority would now give any reasonable sum to retain their pastor; but he would not stay, unless the expression were unanimous. Deacon Hyde says, "If he chooses to leave, he can; we can find another." And Deacon White intimates that the pastor's movement toward another field "is but a ruse to get more money here."

The ladies talk it up at the sewing-circle, whither Mary's feelings will not let her go. Mrs. Brown astonishes the circle with sentiments they never heard from her before. Among other things, she says her husband had been talking with the agent of a life insurance company; and, just as Mr. Vernon received his call, he was going round to see if the people would get the

minister's life insured for at least as much as the principal and interest of what he has spent of his own property while he has been our pastor. He thinks it would be only an act of justice.

"But that would not help him any *now*," said Mrs. Rogers.

"It would provide something for the family," said Mrs. Brown; "if he should be taken away."

"Get his life insured! did you say?" ejaculated an old lady, looking over her spectacles; "never heerd of such things 'mong Christian folks. I should call that tempting Providence."

"I think," said a pert young miss, "that ministers ought to lay up something for old age."

Hester's lip curled, and she said, "Ministers ought not to live to be old."

"What do you mean?" said another.

"They ought to *wear out*, first," was the reply.

Ah! Hester, thy spirit is sore to-day, at thought of losing thy pastor's family; and thou art putting on another coat of ice, lest the scalding tears within melt through, and betray to others the sensibility which, early wounded, is guarded like a dangerous secret in thy own bosom.

Beyond the parish, there was a circle to feel the approaching separation with lively regret. It was the little band of ministerial brethren. How could they spare brother Vernon from the ministers' meeting? "How can we spare his family from the neighborhood?" said Charles Herbert; "visiting there is the one great solace of my bachelorhood. Mrs. Vernon has such a genial humor, she makes everybody happy around her. Even when suffering herself, she has some playful stroke to make others smile." And he rode over to Olney for a last visit. He had many regrets to utter; and, finally, a word for Mrs. Vernon's private ear, which, with some embarrassment, he ventured thus:

"You say I have lost my opportunity with the fair Miss Julia." (He had never made any direct advances in that direc-

tion; for, though Mary thought he only waited an encouraging word from her, she spoke it not. The only son of the rich Esquire Eaton had asked for Julia Rogers' hand; and Mr. Vernon had just announced the fact that he should have her for a parishioner soon, if he were to stay in Olney.) "As I have lost Miss Julia," said Mr. Herbert, "why will you not speak a word for me at brother Catlin's; at least, ascertain — you ladies have the tact — whether it would be of any use for me to look that way. Is n't Mary Catlin a splendid girl?"

"Why, Mr. Herbert," said Mrs. Vernon, "you are wild this time. Mary is but seventeen, with her school-girl laurels fresh upon her."

"I can wait another year," said the young man. Mrs. Vernon shook her head. "O!" said he, "I see you think I am too old;" and he kissed the children good-by, and went back to his bachelor sanctum.

Mrs. Vernon sat musingly a while. "Yes, Mary Catlin is 'a splendid girl;' yet she is not destined, *at present*, to be mistress of any parsonage. Inheriting her mother's gift of poesy, and her father's love of the exact sciences, and the sensibility of both, *she* is looking, with an eagle eye, and plumed wing, and swelling heart, toward the temple of Fame, yet with a chastened spirit that lays all her prospective trophies at the foot of the Cross. Dear, bright young creature!" At that moment she trips up the steps. She had come to make her parting visit, and to help, meanwhile, in the many, many things, that were to be done before the final departure.

Lucy Merton was over twice a week, going home always with red eyes, and a heart utterly unreconciled to the separation. She had obtained a promise that, after all was ready for removal, the family would pass a night with her, and be started thence on their distant way.

The last Sabbath brought a crowded audience, and the place was literally a Bochim. Many tearful glances were cast at the little group in the minister's pew, whose self-possession cost

a continual effort. How tender was the sermon! — how eloquent, too! — disfigured by no personalities. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ!" How many in that little church were living witnesses of its power!

And now followed the week of removal, — days of much manual toil, and a constant tension of the spirit's chords. It seems an occasion of general grief, though it may be there is secret joy in a few uncongenial hearts. There is much proffered service; in some instances, as if to make atonement for past neglect. The Douglasses stand aloof. They have been cool for many months. Some mischief-maker whispered, that Mrs. Vernon thinks little of their society. They would have repelled the suspicion in regard to any other friend; but the old native jealousy toward a minister's wife, confides in the slander; and here, where there is a debt of gratitude, and a tie cemented by two precious graves, they can cherish distrust and bitterness! They will find, ere long, that they never had a gentler, truer friend than the pastor's wife; and when she is gone, the remembrance of this requital will sorely pierce their hearts.

The last day has come at length, and the calls multiply. The little lame boy comes to return his books. Old Mrs. Hawkins sends home the cup in which the jelly was sent to her sick grandchild, and asks the loan of the "Farewell Sermon," as "her rheumatis would n't let her get out to meetin'."

Mr. Nelson's little daughter came for the thornless rose promised her, to plant at her mother's grave. "May be," said the child, "I 'd miss of getting it, if I wait till spring; for there 's no telling, father says, who 'll come after you."

Hester Allen was there all day, plying the needle, and quarrelling with herself to keep back the tears.

"*O! will this day of partings ever end?*" says the pastor's wife to herself, as, with burning eyes and aching head, she tries to collect her scattered thoughts for needful direction about the household stuff, — and still the confusion multiplies. The children are wearied out. Allie is trying to help. Rose is wan

dering through the blockaded rooms, and bemoaning to her dolly, that "there is nowhere to stay." And little Carrie is fast asleep on a pile of shawls in a corner of what was once the bed-room.

And still, amid the packing of trunks and the moving of boxes, the leave-taking goes sorrowfully on; — here with noisy lamentation, and there with a silent pressure of the lip and hand, — and more than once, with a parting gift and a farewell note, which will be read to-morrow with full eyes and a fuller heart.

Susan Brown and Hester are the last to leave; and they have taken the monthly rose and the japonica.

And now they are all gone. Mary has wept so much, she wonders if the fount of tears within will ever fill again.

The goods at last are sent off. Mr. Merton's carriage has long waited at the door; and Captain Brown has started with the trunks in his lumber-wagon, first giving Mary a "V," saying, "Money answereth all things." It is just at sunset. The children are already in the carriage, and Edward is attending to some *last* thing, which always appears after *everything* is done. Mary stands before the window of her own room; — that window from which she has watched the changing seasons of seven fleeting years, whose echoes now come back to her ear — "a dirge-like song, half bliss, half woe!" The sunset glow is on the mountain side, whose forests, from base to crest, are tinged with the first autumnal hues, contrasting with the clumps of evergreen that rise distinct, like the changeless hopes of a better world, 'mid the brilliancy and decay of this. The sky is beautiful with violet and gold. The church is intercepted by twin-elms, above which the spire is visible; while, beneath their drooping foliage, is caught the glimpse of many a marble pillar, in the place of graves. The eyes that gazed upon this scene were sorrowful, yet clear. Tears had flowed before, and they may come afterward; but now, there must be a last, undimmed look, to daguerreotype every feature of the dear

spot, for future yearnings of the heart. And now the gaze fastens on objects nearer still, — the maples on each side the avenue, the little nursery of fruit, the flowering shrubs and rose vines, the leafy arbor, the bordered walks, — all, all was their own handiwork. Not a vegetable growth, but they had started, and watched, and nursed. The garden blooms are nipped by the early frost. They will put forth anew at the breath of another spring; but who can love them so well as they, or cherish them so tenderly? Does *she* think of this, as she leans her head wearily against the sash, yet does not turn away? Ay, and of many a sweeter, holier link beside, binding her very soul to the spot! The sky pales; all hues of the mountain merge in the solemn tint of the evergreen; the evening wind begins its soft, sad cadence among the pines; the voice of the brook, low, yet relentless, murmurs, "On, on!" The moon is up, and shines into the pensive face, suddenly upturned to the sky. Her hands draw nearer, and clasp closely; and she instinctively turns toward her wonted place of prayer. Bare walls and the naked floor meet her eye. No matter, the prayer is in her heart, and Jesus can read it there. A moment more, and Edward gently, tenderly draws her hand within his arm, and silently leads her to the carriage. As it turns away, she looks back once more, and catches sight of a straggling branch of honeysuckle, that has escaped from its fillet, and is swinging up and down, over the doorway, in the freshening breeze. It seems to her the spirit of the deserted parsonage, waving a sorrowful adieu.

CHAPTER XLI.

"Sunrise will come next;
The shadow of the night is passed away."

"Courage! you travel through a darksome cave;
But still, as nearer to the light you draw,
Fresh gales will meet you from the upper air,
And wholesome dews of heaven your forehead lave,
And darkness lighten more, till full of awe
You stand in the open sunshine unaware!"

"Thou dwell'st on sorrow's high and barren place,
But round about the mount, an angel guard,—
Chariots of fire, horses of fire, encamp,
To keep thee safe for heaven."

LET us follow on to the suburbs of the city. In that brick hotel, four stories high, we find our Mary, with her little girls, boarding till arrangements can be made for house-keeping. Allie is put away to school; and as the new church edifice is not quite ready for dedication, the pastor elect postpones his inauguration, and takes the interval for a visit to his old chum, Frederick Morton. He is much in need of recreation, and so is Mary; but they cannot both go and take the children, for the purse is low. She is, therefore, staying patiently behind,—very lonely, 'mid brick walls and stranger faces. How does her heart long for many a familiar face,—ay, for some whom she never more may greet on earth!

O, the irrepressible yearning for a buried friend! for the well-remembered footsteps, that always sent a thrill of pleasure to our bosom; for the eyes, into which we were wont to gaze as in a book, and read the soul; for the voice, that was ever sweet music to our hearts, whose echoes ever and anon wake up and thrill us with the old familiar strain, yet grow fainter as we

listen, till they die away; for the pressure of the hand, as we remember it well, as we feel it oft again in dreams. O! if there were no better land, where are to be gathered again the links of love's dissevered chain, who could bear this *heart-sickness*, for which earth has no remedy?

Mr. Vernon planned his absence for a fortnight, and he wrote back often. In his first letter he says:

. . . . "This is the same Bessie Crampton, of Salem memory; her cheeks slightly less round than when you twined those white roses in her dark curls, for the nuptial rite, yet her bloom as fresh and her black eyes as mischievous. She is equally at home, receiving a group of 'fashionables' in her splendid parlor, or playing a game of romps with her boys in the nursery; in which last exercise I joined her this morning, and am now immortalized among the juveniles.

"But Frederick, my old chum, is *greatly* changed; that is, he has grown *great* in more senses than one. First (to speak methodically), in social *position;* — he has increased in riches and honor. Second, in material substance; — he is so portly you would scarce recognize him. And, thirdly, in his own estimation; — he has put on a shade or two of self-complacency; but it sits very easy on him, and makes him vastly comfortable, and hurts nobody.

"I am most cordially received, — welcomed to the freedom of the house. If you were only here to enjoy it too! Bessie speaks of you almost every hour. Morton and I had a long, serious talk last evening. He dwelt upon what he called the unfairness of the world in awarding its praises, and said, frankly, 'Your prospects, Vernon, were fairer than mine, before you chose to sacrifice them to a higher calling. Here, I own a place worth five thousand, and have fifteen thousand more, snugly invested. Now, because I gave a thousand last month, at the meeting of the American Board, my liberality was heralded in the public journals. But you have given all *I* am worth,

and more; yet the world takes it very quietly. I understand your motives now, I trust, better than once. I hope you have forgiven that foolish talk of mine, years ago, at Salem. There are times, my dear fellow, when I envy you your reward."

That fortnight, — how heavi y it drags away, even 'mid the children's pleasant prattle! A long letter from sister Harriet is received and answered. It details, with mathematical accuracy, the hair-breadth 'scapes of the journey thither, and the forlorn condition in which she found the six children, — "the thought of whom," she declares, "moved her to this marriage, quite as strongly as her regard for their father; and she found the case had not been exaggerated for the sake of effect." (Miss Allison never could see untidiness, anywhere, without an instinctive impulse to take hold, and — as the Scotch say — give things "a redding up.") She has made a new place of it there, with her Yankee housewifery, and the comforts she carried with her. She is getting used to the ways of the people, and it does not shock her propriety now, as it did at first, to hear herself inquired for, as "the ministress." Her health has been good, and she thinks the talk about "getting acclimated," is all moonshine; and "as for fever-and-ague, she don't believe in it, and *won't have it;* and if she does, *will not give up to it;* — what 's the use in lying by for 'the shakes?'" The letter had laid unfinished four weeks, when a postscript was added, in the dominie's hand, to the effect, that "sister Harriet, being seized with chills and fever, for a time refused to take her bed or have medical treatment, — endeavoring, with great determination, to pursue her household cares, as usual; in consequence of which, she had been alarmingly sick, — was now only able to raise herself in bed, and with no prospect of health for many days to come."

Mary's sisterly heart sighed over the sad issue as heartily as she had laughed over the four pages in her energetic sister's peculia. vein. "Ah!" thought she, "God's servants every-

where must Love the discipline of affliction! Bunyan was right —

> 'The Christian man is never long at ease;
> When one fright 's gone, another doth him seize.'"

The day of Mr. Vernon's expected return has arrived; but, in his stead, there comes a letter, playfully commenced, with his wonted thoughtfulness of that sensitive heart, quick to take alarm.

"ELM COTTAGE, Oct., 18—

"DEAR MARY, MINE, —

"Why am I not with you to-night? — Because I am here. And why am I here? — Because I am not with you. My kind friends would not let me out to-day. I have been a little ill since I wrote you last. Now, do not let your quick imagination go beyond the sober verity. I say, a *little* ill; — a cold, with some tendency to inflammation of the lungs, and an obstinate headache. I am better to-day, and almost fancied I was well enough to travel; but Morton put an injunction on me, with heavy penalties; so I am legally bound, you perceive.

"Imagine me, dearest, with a superb velvet wrapper, lined with rich brocade, hanging in loose folds about me, and my feet encased in slippers to match, half-buried in a luxurious damask-cushioned rocker, and every want anticipated. (Ah! excepting always one great want of my heart, which cannot be filled away from its best earthly treasure!) I hope to start to-morrow for home. Ah, me! — would you believe it, Mary? — when I wrote that word, home, my thoughts were of the dear parsonage, nestling in the valley, — *our* home no longer! Since I left, I have thought much of *you*, in connection with leaving Olney; and I fear the severance of those ties has been too heavy a tax upon your sensibilities. I dwelt upon it one night till I felt no elasticity or courage to enter upon our new enterprise. My heart sunk so low, that I thought only you could fish it up again. O, how I missed my comforter But the Lord mer-

cifully lifted me up, and gave me such views of his character and his dealings with us, — of the brevity of this chequered life, and the glorious realities beyond, — that I could say, cheerfully, 'Lord, here am I; do with me what seemeth good in thy sight.'

"Let me say, here, dear Mary (you cannot help it, for you are not near enough to put your finger on my lips, — your old resort, when I begin to praise), let me say, that you have been to me an angel of mercy. If, in a ministry of thirteen years since our marriage, I have been able to do anything for God and souls, I owe it, under Him, to *you;* — your wisdom, your love, your faithfulness, your prayers, your hope-inspiring presence, that has illumined all my darkness, and made for me *such a home*. And what if the *place* be changed? — it is home *always*, and *anywhere*, with *you!*

"Bessie comes in, and peremptorily forbids my writing more If you are writing Allie, give him his father's love and blessing. (He is his mother's boy.) Hug Rose, and kiss Carrie for papa and do not forget to pray for a poor sinner, who, as some sign of grace, subscribes himself

"Your Husband."

This was a sad, yet precious letter to the devoted wife. Many tears were shed over it now; and it will be doubly dear to her in the days that are to come, when — but we will not anticipate.

Edward returned, as he had hoped, and with a flush upor his cheek that made Mary say, at the first glance, "I am so relieved to see you looking so well." But presently her heart misgave her. There was something unnatural in his look and manner. He seemed so gratified to be once more with her; — caressed the children with more than his wonted playfulness and had much to say of his pleasant visit. But his voice was hollow; and ever and anon he pressed his hand to his temples, and said, he had feared he was adding to his cold, on his night

passage down the river. At bed-time, he complained of feeling strangely, but hoped rest would relieve him, and he should be himself again on the morrow. Alas! before the morrow came he was tossing with wild delirium!

Sick, and among strangers! How helpless Mary felt! What quick visions rose of the quiet parsonage, of the familiar bed-room, of the cupboard over the mantel, with its vials of simple medicines!

In the morning twilight a messenger was despatched for the physician, who pronounced his disease brain fever.

To the anxious wife it seemed as if the precious time were needlessly wasted in getting anything done for the sufferer. At home, how quickly would she have had the dock-leaves on his feet, the blister on his neck, and the leeches on his temples! There, too, how slight an effort would have secured perfect stillness! She need only put her finger on her lip to have suspended the children's sports, and the noisy operations of the kitchen. Here, in this large boarding-house, were other children than her own. Here was the heavy tramp, to and fro, through the passages, and up and down the stairs.

She had the best medical care, but it was of no avail. The disease progressed without control. To her aching heart the week was one long agony. "O, might the *delirium* but pass away! — if he would only know me! — if he would speak but once to the dear children!" A kind neighbor took the little girls away. "O, but to see dear Dr. Alden, or have sister Catlin's earnest sympathy, or one grasp of farmer Brown's cordial hand! If Leevy Cook were here, or even Milly Green!"

Her heart was one continually uplifted prayer; and when it seemed nigh bursting, for want of vent, she left the unconscious sufferer with one of their *new* friends, and stole up to a little store-room, in the attic, which held their baggage, and there poured out her soul before God. A fire seemed burning in her heart and brain; and, as yet, her eyes were dry. But as she

kneeled there, among trunks and boxes, groaning rather than uttering her pleas, her eyes caught the marking on those rough boards, in that familiar hand, — "books," "sermons," — and the little study at the village parsonage, and the quiet Sabbaths, and the dear family group, came up so vividly, and, with them, the quick recoil, "Gone, — gone forever!" — then first came the relief of tears. Like a little child, she leaned upon the boxes, and wept till her strength was spent. And O, the prayer that followed! — it was, indeed, a casting of her care upon the Lord; and he was present, with his sustaining arm. When she resumed her place by the sick-couch, with the tears trickling down her cheeks, observers thought her grief had gained intensity, while *she* was thankful that it had found an outlet.

O, how much she lived in that one week! — measuring life not by the chronometer of days and hours, but by the soul's experience. Under an impending calamity, how the mind gathers force and expansion! Every faculty seems quickened. Thought is restless, eager, swift; — the past, present, and future, sweep, as in a panorama, before the inner vision, stretching on, and on, till the brain grows dizzy, and the eyes close to avoid the further view.

Mrs. Vernon needs not that the last result of the able council should be broken gently to her ear. Her own heart has already said, "There is no hope."

Often, and again, has her imagination outrun the rapid progress of disease, — anticipating the death scene, the burial among strangers, and her consequent loneliness and penury.

The end draws on apace. Now, at last, the eyes slowly open, with their natural expression, and the lips feebly articulate the names of wife and children. The litle girls are brought to the bed-side, but their dying father is past the power of speech. His cold lips, however, faintly return their warm kisses, and his hand presses Mary's more closely, as if he read her thoughts, and responded to them thus. O, what an alleviation, what a comfort, is this return of reason, ere the spirit

takes its flight! For this the poor wife has offered unceasing prayer, and God in mercy answers the request.

Though Edward cannot speak, his soul communes with hers, and his mute assent to her whispered words proclaims that he has PEACE. But this precious communion is only for a few brief minutes. Death is fast finishing his work. O, the look of agonizing tenderness that he casts on his wife and babes, and then raises upward, as if striving to commit them to the safe protection of Him who has promised to be the widow's God, and the guide of the fatherless! A smile plays about his pallid lips, and the eyes return to her, in a full, earnest gaze, and again look upward to the God of the covenant. She understands it well. Faith triumphs; — she smiles in return, even while her heart is breaking; and with that token he goes to his rest.

Who can depict the sense of utter desolation that came over that widowed heart, as it turned back from the portals of death, with a divided life? "If my dear father were alive, and could take us to the old hearth-stone! — if I could lean on brother William's strong arm! — if sister Harriet, with her fortitude, were here! or if I could have the sympathy of those dear parishioners who knew *him*, and could appreciate my loss, — Bessie, or the kind, good Miss Leevy, or Hester Allen, or dear sister Lucy!"

But, blessed be God, she knew a better source of consolation; and it was not long ere these tossings subsided into a sweet reliance upon the one ever-present, abiding Comforter. Her Redeemer was her husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name.

And now draws on the funeral scene. The people are kind, considerate, serious. They are disappointed, but they cannot mourn as would the whole population of the valley among whom he went preaching the Gospel so many years. Mary feels the difference, and can hardly forbear a regret, that, if the event were inevitable, he did not go down to the grave amid the tears and lamentations of his old people, and repose in the quiet

church-yard, by the baby's side. She had written a letter to Mabel, hardly expecting her to come, yet feeling that the warm-hearted girl might grieve if the opportunity were denied her She came in season, and mingled her tears, as one of the mourning children that had lost a beloved parent. Sister Ellen, too was there, and the sensitive Nelly, with tumultuous grief Not till Allie came did the stricken heart find any earthly support. After his first burst of childish sorrow was over, he took it upon him to comfort his bereaved mother, by those precious words of Scripture consolation with which he was so familiar; and, ere she was aware, she found herself leaning on this dear boy, and clinging to his arm for support, as she did to Edward's when they buried their first-born.

The funeral services were in the church, and the remains were deposited in a family vault, till the final disposition of them should be decided upon. Mabel goes back with Allie, and the mother takes the little ones, for a few days, to Ellen's home.

Let us follow the tidings of the pastor's death, as they go to the several communities where he has lived and labored. At Millville the intelligence makes a mere ripple in life's foaming sea. "Ah!" "Indeed!" "He could preach eloquent sermons!" "I am sorry to hear it!" Such were the passing tributes, that were soon forgotten in the next exciting theme. A few hearts, doubtless, grieved in secret, and recalled many an incident of his ministry. Mrs. Moulton wrote to Mrs. Vernon a letter of affectionate condolence, and inclosed a gift of twenty-five dollars. She had never felt quite easy about the piano.

To Olney the tidings came like a mountain avalanche, or an earthquake's shock. The community seemed stunned, as by a sudden blow. The sorrow was universal, and the sad particulars were carefully gleaned, and passed from lip to lip, and wept over in many a household. At the weekly prayer-meeting, Captain Brown choked in prayer, and was unable to proceed,

and even the deacons made a feeling allusion to the bereavement.

"What have such men to do lamenting for our dear pastor?" said Hester Allen. "But for them, he might be alive, and happy, here, to this day." (O, Hester! you have no right to say that.) "Everybody says, 'I'm sorry.' It's an easy thing to say; and there are enough to ask 'what Mrs. Vernon is going to do, — left destitute, and all those children on her hands?' But why don't you *act*, as well as *talk?* Make up to *her* what they expended, here, of their own property. That six hundred dollars would be worth everything to her, and we ought to raise it; and it shall be done, if *I* can bring it about;" and Hester takes a subscription paper, and starts on her praiseworthy errand. Captain Brown gives five dollars. Esquire Eaton "will think about it." "While you're thinking," said Hester, "just please to remember that it is not a charity. It's only simple justice, — what you lawfully owe;" and she passed on, to Deacon Hyde's. The deacon heard her in silence, and took out fifty cents from his pocket.

"Fifty cents, Deacon Hyde! Why, you ought to give six or eight dollars. No, I will not take the paltry sum. It would burn my fingers. But the Lord deliver me from such narrowness of soul!" (Take care, Hester; that is not the right spirit.)

She goes over the parish, and the result is forty dollars, which are sent, with many words of sympathy and messages of affection.

Poor Mrs. Loomis, a life-long invalid, writes, also, a letter of condolence. "She thought not to outlive her pastor, yet she had seen, these many months, that he was preparing fast for heaven." O, how precious was the letter, though poorly written, and many words misspelt! Then came the customary resolutions from the Association, which, drawn up by Mr. Merton, Mary felt were something more than a mere form. These opened afresh the fountain of her tears.

News of the sad event reached the quiet spot where his ministry was first opened, awakening peculiar emotions of tenderness and regret. Mr. Vernon they remembered as he came to them in the spring and freshness of his years. They were his first love, and he was their pastor when they were a confiding ministerial people. When they had heard of his call to the city, and his popularity there, they took pride in the fact that he began his ministry in Salem. How often, 'mid their dissensions, had they sighed for another Deacon Ely and Mr. Vernon! Poor Leevy spent a night in tears, and, at length, thanked God that she was hastening to that better land, where neither death nor separation can intrude; where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God.

Even Mr. Wood was softened; and when he inquired after the stricken family, and learned that the lamb of the flock bore the name of his lost darling, the stern man melted down.

He took his pen, and wrote to the young widow — in a kinder strain, even, than he at first intended (when the snow begins to melt in a spring sun it vanishes fast) — a fatherly letter; even asking her forgiveness for his old severity. He alluded to the child, and said she might rely on his doing something for little Carrie. (The line was blurred — a tear had evidently fallen as he wrote.) He enclosed a five-dollar note, and pressed her to visit Salem.

Truly, soon or late, wisdom is justified of her children. This letter Mary wept over, and so longed to have Edward see! and laid by, as another token of the divine faithfulness, and a fulfilment of covenant promises.

There were other letters of condolence. Sister Lucy's, literally wet with tears; and one from Mr. Morton and Bessy, giving many particulars of Mr. Vernon's visit, — of what he said and did while with them, — which Mary read, again and again, and hoarded up in her heart of hearts.

Later still, a precious freight, from the far west, with a short note from Eddie, in which was all his soul, — tender, earnest,

manly, — saying, Allie could *comfort* her better than *he;* yet he hoped, some day, to come back, and *do something* for her and the children.

Very precious is all this human sympathy; but O, how utterly inadequate, *alone*, to bind up a bleeding heart! How superficial the best of it, compared with that perfect sympathy of Jesus, which enters into the deepest and the subtlest feelings of our nature, understanding our griefs even better than we do ourselves, and bearing for us the *heavy* end of every burden! Thanks unto God for his unspeakable gift!

CHAPTER XLII.

"Her eye was bright,
E'en yet, with something of a starry light;
But her form wasted, and her pallid cheek
Wore, oft and patiently, a fatal streak, —
A *rose*, whose root was *death*."

"The early flowers that spring
Beside the garden walk, and those tall trees,
Would I might see them but once more, and touch
The pleasant vine that o'er my window climbed.
I could breathe freer there."

"Hope still lifts her radiant finger,
Pointing to the eternal home,
Upon whose portals yet they linger,
Looking back for us to come."

It is hard to stanch the tears of a fresh bereavement, ere nature has had her due, and gird the relaxed muscles to grapple with want, in the close struggle for daily bread. Yet many are the sons and daughters of poverty, in this sin-blighted world, who cannot afford the luxury of *time dedicate to grief*, — many a poor minister's widow who enters the arena of toil, when she craves the solitude and privacy sacred to sorrow.

Our Mary was not the woman to fall dependently on the nearest charity. Then, though there were many to speak kind words, or present a few dollars from their purse, under the first impulse of pity, there was not one — there seldom is — to take the matter in hand, and make permanent provision for those whose all has been sacrificed to the service of the church, and whose only inheritance is the Lord God of Israel.

True, she had received pressing invitations to *visit* here and there. Julia Rogers (now Mrs. Henry Eaton) and Captain Brown had urged her immediate return to Olney; but how could she go back to the dear spot where every object would be a sharp reminder of her buried joys? Besides, there is no employment for her there. O, not yet can she go to Olney!

All her effects are at the new place, which they had begun to call home. There is her pecuniary indebtedness, which she must contrive ways to meet. There, for the present, she resolves to abide. The Lord has already raised her up friends among strangers. Taking board for herself and two little ones, in an humble dwelling, she keeps enough of her household stuff to furnish a single room, and the rest is sold under the auctioneer's hammer. The library, for the present, she excepts hoping to preserve it, with the manuscripts, for her dear boy. With the donations from abroad, the sale pays off the transportation bills, — which the people do not offer to liquidate, — settles the large account at the hotel, and covers the funeral charges; so that, with the exception of Allie's school bill, she is even with the world. *That*, Mabel, unknown to her, took upon herself, when she went back with Allison, and made an arrangement by which he can run of errands out of school, and hereafter pay his own way, — the kind teacher assuring her that there would be no further charge of tuition for the minister's orphan.

Now, Mrs. Vernon looks about her for employment; and the most feasible plan seems the opening of a private school. Her new friends look on her fragile form, and shake their

heads; but her heart is set upon it, and they soon procure her pupils. She is well started with a charge of twenty, among whom are her own little girls. She revives her knowledge of piano music, and has an extra class. She toils to perfect her skill in drawing, that she may avail herself of this art to increase her scanty income. Meanwhile, the bright spot on her cheek, that came and went so fitfully all the last summer, at Olney, has deepened into the unmistakable hectic flush; and the slight cough becomes harassing at night and morn. Still she plies her task, though scarce able to drag her weary step from boarding-place to school-room. The cold winter, with its long, solitary nights, gets slowly away; yet she is patient and cheerful, and sometimes mirthful, for the sake of her little ones. They often "wish dear papa would come back one little minute;" yet they are quite happy in their mother's love and care. O, childhood's blest unconsciousness of ill! She has many wakeful hours while her babes sleep. Who shall tell how they are filled? — with what touching memories of the past; what sorrowful realizations and forebodings, alternating with fervent believing prayers, and sweet meditations of heavenly truth, and blessed communings with the spirit world?

It was in these days she wrote a long letter — a page at a time — to her dear. only brother, with whom she has kept a frequent correspondence during all the vicissitudes of her eventful life. She wrote him of her bereavement in the acme of her grief, and it is not yet time for his reply to reach her. But it is surely on the way, freighted with the tenderest sympathy. It contains, too, his estimate of their respective spheres of service, in which he awards to her — his gentle, patient, self-sacrificing sister, rather than to himself, the exiled missionary — the palm for the martyr-spirit and the martyr's crown. Admonished by her failing strength, she waits not for this comforting response across the waters, but writes again; — and from this second letter, we make the following extract:

"It was a favorite project, in which Edward joined with me, to take your dear boy and train him up with ours; but the all-wise Disposer orders otherwise. Now, I shall not live to give your darlings the shelter of my arms; but, may I hope that, if at some future day, you send them hither, pains will be taken to bring them into near intimacy with mine? Are they not more closely related than *common* cousins? . . . . . I do not for a moment regret my early choice, or murmur at the trials of the way. What I have endured for Christ, O, how little does it seem, as I draw near eternity!

"Our sainted father said to me, a little more than a year ago, 'that I should have one tie after another transferred from earth to heaven, till this kind of attraction would be strongest upward.' So have I lived to find it; though, for my dear children's sake, I might desire to tarry longer. I can, however, commit them to the God of the covenant, on the strength of that promise which has never failed, though proved these many centuries.

"*They will be cared for!* — this I feel unwaveringly; yet, doubtless, their tender feet might be spared many roughnesses, with a mother's hand to smooth the way. God has been very good to me. I am not worthy of all the mercies and the kindnesses that he has shown me."

Spring came again to the stricken mourner. After the first smarting of the wound was over, her heart began to yearn for the old familiar places, — Mayfield, and Salem, and Olney. But now that her school term is ended, and her failing health forewarns her that she will never teach again, she must husband with care the slender purse. She still keeps her music scholars, and bends patiently over the few girls that come to her for lessons in drawing; — but this cannot last much longer.

The first of April brings Captain Brown to the city, partly on business, but more to call on Mrs. Vernon. He is much struck at the change in her appearance, and can hardly keep his self-possession through the brief interview. Before leaving,

he asks her if there is anything she wants; and she says, falteringly, "Nothing half so much as to see the old place again." He slips ten dollars into her hand, from his capacious palm. "Ah!" said she, playfully, "you have not forgotten your old text." "And now," said he, "when it gets a little warmer, we shall expect you. The women-folks will be impatient till you come." Last of all, he took from his hat a carefully wrapped bouquet of flowers, saying, "Here is something, of Susie's sending. I only hope you won't shed as many tears over it as she did this morning;" — and, without waiting to note the effect, he drew the back of his hand across his eyes, and said good-by. Without this touching gift, Mary would have wept as soon as he was gone. The tide of feeling had been forcibly repressed; but now, as she looked at the familiar flowers, — the geranium sprigs and blossoms from the very bush she had nurtured for years; the half-opened buds from her own monthly rose, and especially the violets from the parsonage garden (she knew so well the spot where they were culled), — who shall blame her if she wept till her nerves were all unstrung, and she had scarcely strength at night to undress the children, and lay herself upon the pillow? But all night there mingled with her dreams a vision of the dear old home, with that straggling branch of honeysuckle that waved the sad farewell; and the vines putting on their greenness; and the babbling brook, and whispering pines, and solemn mountain. And when she woke, her heart leaped at the thought of exchanging these brick walls, soon, for the beautiful reality.

Captain Brown, on his return, could scarcely speak of Mrs. Vernon with composure. "Such a change! — you 'll see — you 'll see! Her ears and fingers are as transparent as that cheeny cup on the shelf. If she comes here, wife, she 'll not go back again. She 's most through. And if you 've a mind, I 'm thinking we 'll offer to take one of the little ones."

"She would n't trust the child to *us*, Mr. Brown."

"But, Susie has been with her so much, I often think she 's got her ways."

"Well, I am *willing*," said the good woman. "We will see!"

The hope of this visit, Mary kept many days in her heart; but, alas! it was never to be realized. As the time drew near, an unexpected claim was handed in for settlement, and, after a struggle, she appropriated to it the ten dollars, and resigned the hope of seeing Olney. From this time she sank rapidly.

Mabel had foreboded such a fate, even as far back as that last sickness, a year ago, at Olney, when the parsonage walls were soaked by the spring rains, and she was overtasked with care, and many comforts were foregone, because the money failed. After Mr. Vernon's funeral, she had asked the landlady to drop her a line, if Mrs. Vernon should be sick and need a nurse. So, now, she came as if for a visit; and days passed, and she took by degrees the mother's place with the children, and did everything so naturally, that Mrs. Vernon did not realize her own debility, or know the extent of Mabel's generosity. Noble girl! She had left her place, where she was earning three dollars a week, and brought with her the savings of the last year, devoting her all to smooth the closing days of one who had taken her, a motherless girl, and reared her up to womanhood. Thank God! humanity and gratitude have not died out of the world. "But not many rich, not many noble." It is still the poor of this world that are rich in faith and good works.

Mabel sees that the sick-room is supplied with every comfort. One thing, indeed, there is — pure country air — that money will not buy. The invalid pines for the sweet breezes that used to stray through her bedroom window. "But, after all," said she, "heaven is as near me here; and there 'are sweeter bowers than Eden knows.' O, for that blessed rest!"

She was sometimes anxious to see some way of disposing of the children. She had written to Mr. Catlin, to come and advise with her; and Mabel thought she had a plan, to exchange Rose for Ellen, if her aunt would give her up, in case Mr. Catlin might offer to take one of them into his own family. For this dear one she felt the most solicitude. But Mr.

Catlin did not come. She knew not that he was waiting, in the daily hope that the spasmodic affection of the heart, under which his care-worn wife was suffering, would soon give back, allowing him to leave her for a journey to the city. The angel of death is over his dwelling, yet the time will come when dear Mary Catlin will remember the little orphans. They will ever have a friend, too, while Mabel Ellis lives; as we shall see, if permitted hereafter to trace their history.

Mary's faith, on the whole, triumphed. Sometimes she spoke of brother James taking one of the little girls to his western home. She was sure some way would be provided. And she said, at last, "I have settled nothing; but I can leave Providence to arrange it all."

Mabel sent for Allie, when she saw the end approaching. He had been prepared, and bore himself with a fortitude and judgment that could be expected of few boys in their eleventh year. The day after his arrival, his mother was better, and they had a long, sweet talk, that will ever abide in his heart. She spoke freely, and calmly too, of their past history; of the peculiar trials attending their calling; lamented that she had not always looked as she might on the sunniest side of things, and had that grace and faith in exercise which would have taken away the sting of many a trouble. She sometimes feared her children would magnify the discomforts of a minister's lot, and shrink from it for themselves. She alludes to cousin Edward, and leaves for him an affectionate message: — "If he acquire property, tell him to remember that he is only a steward, and to do all the good that God gives him the ability; and not to retain his old prejudice against Olney. The difficulty there, was want of light and thought, as well as want of heart. They will do better by another minister Much good seed has been sown there, which, though long buried, will not be lost." She expresses to Allie her conviction that better days are coming in the ministry. The churches will awake to the value of their religious privileges, and make their pastors more comfortable. They will see it to be their interest, and

feel it a privilege. She recalls with him the happy days he so well remembers, when, though there were many shadows hovering near, they had joy, and peace, and domestic love, and Christian comfort, around the domestic hearth. She tells him, too, of the unequalled joy his dear father felt when he had comforted some tempted soul, or brought back a wanderer to the Saviour's fold. Allie, in return, opens all his heart; and the tears, till now repressed, flow down her pale cheek, and she clasps him to her bosom, as he says it is his great ambition to be a good minister of the gospel, and follow his dear father's steps. She forewarns him, that, unless he has great singleness of purpose, trials may shake this resolution. But Allie smiles, and says, "Have I not seen the dark side already, mother? So I shall not be disappointed."

This was the last connected conversation. The effort had been too much. Kind caresses, single expressions of maternal love, broken prayers, ejaculatory praises, and silent benedictions, filled up the closing scene. And on Mabel's faithful bosom, with one hand in Allie's, and the little ones held where she could see them, in the arms of pitying friends, quietly, and without pain, the silver cord was loosed; and, at the early age of thirty-three, she joined the beatified above, who wait the fleeting days till the whole circle shall be again complete in a blest reünion in the home on high. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

The precious clay is placed, temporarily, in the vault by Edward's side; while Mabel confides to the orphan boy her purpose, that both the parents shall yet sleep together under the blue sky, by little Willie's side, in the dear church-yard at Olney.

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